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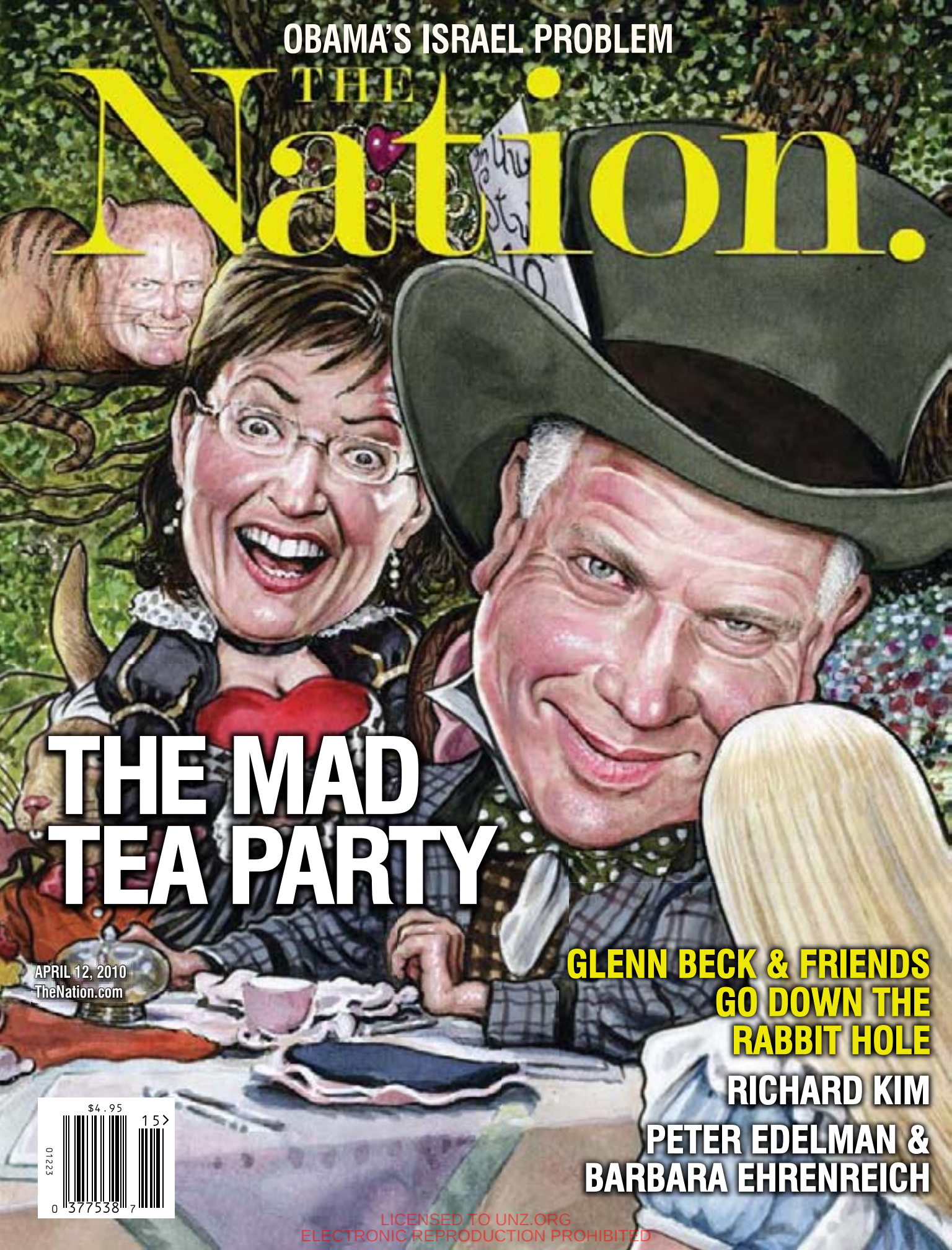

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The Nation.
THE WRONG KIND OF GREEN
HOW CONSERVATION GROUPS ARE BARGAINING AWAY OUR FUTURE
JOHANN HARI

Big Green: Outed and Outraged

Below are letters from various environmental groups responding to our March 22 cover story, "The Wrong Kind of Green," by Johann Hari. Because space in our Letters column is limited, they have been abridged. For longer versions, go to TheNation.com.
—The Editors

Montpelier, Vt.

Johann Hari's "The Wrong Kind of Green" is an irresponsible and toxic mixture of inaccurate information and uninformed analysis. Hari, who did not contact the National Wildlife Federation, has written a work of fiction that hardly merits a response, except that it stoops to a new low by attacking the reputation of the late Jay Hair, a former CEO of the National Wildlife Federation whose powerful legacy of conservation achievement speaks for itself.

The National Wildlife Federation is funded primarily by the generous donations of 4 million members and supporters. Corporate partnerships for our educational work account for less than 0.5 percent of our funding. Our dedicated staff, volunteers and state affiliates fight tirelessly to take on polluters, protect wildlife habitat, promote clean energy and educate families about wildlife and the importance of spending time outdoors in nature.

What will *The Nation* do next, blame polar bears for global warming?

Christine Dorsey, *communications director National Wildlife Federation*

Seattle

Johann Hari has made outrageous and false statements about my late husband, Dr. Jay Hair, who died in 2002 after a five-year battle with cancer. Jay devoted his life—and his considerable passion, courage and intelligence—to protecting this planet. He never betrayed that mission to "suck millions" from oil and gas companies. While Jay was president of the National Wildlife Federation, corporate contributions never exceeded 1 percent of NWF's budget.

In 1982 Jay established NWF's Corporate Conservation Council to create a forum for dialogue with Fortune 500 leaders. Prior to this controversial initiative, almost the only place business and environmental leaders met was in court. Jay took considerable heat, but he understood that the enormity of our challenges required that all sectors—private, government, NGO, religious—be involved and talking to one another. The council was funded solely by its members; NWF's budget was not drawn upon to create the council, nor did corporate money from the council seep into NWF's regular budget.

After the 1989 *Exxon Valdez* spill, Jay was the first national environmental leader to go to Prince William Sound to draw attention to the social and environmental devastation. Under Jay's leadership, NWF initiated the class-action lawsuit against Exxon for punitive damages. He protested on the floor of an Exxon stockholders meeting. If Exxon or anyone thought that Corporate Conservation Council membership bought "reputation insurance," they clearly were mistaken.

Hari's sloppy reporting smeared the reputation of a fine man. You owe an apology.

Leah Hair

San Francisco

Thin on solutions, Johann Hari's story was so plump with distortions of reality that it might have been written by Lewis Carroll. Hari's silliest innuendo is that the Sierra Club is somehow less than aggressive in the fight against coal power. Sierra Club members have blocked no fewer than 119 coal-fired power plants in recent years, and the organization is regarded by friend and foe as the most successful force in the critical effort to scrap coal power. On February 10 even climate scientist James Hansen pulled on a Sierra Club T-shirt and participated in a Sierra Student Coalition anti-coal rally at the University of North Carolina—one of dozens of such rallies our young activists have held in support of Hansen's number-one anti–climate disruption goal: to move America beyond coal.

Hari also offered the false and offensive analogy that Sierra Club's marketing partner-

(continued on page 23)

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Obama's Israel Problem

One of the many platitudes ritually invoked at the annual AIPAC conference is the claim that US and Israeli strategic interests are indivisible. It was repeated again this year, by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, among others, even as the allies struggled to patch up a nasty rift arising from the Netanyahu government's announcement of new settlement construction during Vice President Biden's recent visit to Israel.

EDITORIAL

But what if the claim isn't true? This year it was challenged from unusual quarters, when Gen. David Petraeus, Centcom commander, told the Senate that the Israel-Palestine conflict—and widespread anger in the Middle East over Washington's favoritism for Israel—is hampering regional partnerships and fueling recruitment by Islamist extremists. And while Biden delivered the usual boilerplate about standing "shoulder to shoulder" with Israel in his public remarks there, in private he was harsh; according to the daily *Yedioth Ahronoth*, he told Netanyahu, "What you're doing here undermines the security of our troops who are fighting in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. That endangers us, and it endangers regional peace."

It's one thing for dissident professors or activists to challenge assumptions about US-Israel relations; it's quite another for the most senior—and most respected—military officials to do so. The fact is that the Israel-Palestine conflict has been stalled for so long in large part because Washington has been unwilling to exert serious pressure on Israel. While Obama's appointment of George Mitchell as special envoy and his Cairo speech last year were promising gestures, the administration was disastrously undermined in the fall when it climbed down from its insistence on a settlement freeze.

It's time for the administration to confront Netanyahu's intransigence directly. It can begin by reasserting longstanding principles of international law and US policy: the acquisition of territory by war is inadmissible, and thus all settlements, whether inhabited by Zionist extremists in Hebron or apolitical suburbanites in East Jerusalem, are illegal. The world community has long recognized that a reasonable two-state solution requires a division roughly along the 1967 lines—including in Jerusalem—with at most minor adjustments.

The closest the sides ever came to a solution was at the January 2001 Taba conference, which took place only because of pressure from President Clinton. The proposals discussed there remain the best chance for resolving the conflict, a prospect further enhanced at the regional level by the Arab League's Beirut Declaration, which offers full recognition of Israel in exchange for an end to the occupation and Palestinian independence.

The Obama administration should formally propose, and then vigorously push, its own peace plan along these lines. But simply proposing one will not be enough; stacks of such plans are gathering dust in archives around the world. Washington must also make clear that it will not tolerate stonewalling or evasion. The administration should encourage reconciliation within the fractured Palestinian movement—since only a unified leadership will have the popular support necessary to enforce an agreement—even as it warns Israel that continued settlement construction will seriously damage US-Israel relations. President Eisenhower was not afraid to threaten economic sanctions in the face of Israel's refusal to withdraw from the Sinai after the 1956 Suez war; nor was George H.W. Bush when Israel refused to halt settlement construction. President Obama must be prepared to do the same.

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Immigrants on the March

COMMENT

In the weeks leading up to the March 21 demonstration for comprehensive immigration reform, organizers were careful to tamp down turnout expectations, stating only that "tens of thousands" would descend on Washington. It was just a few days before the event—with reports of countless buses heading toward the nation's capital—that they hinted that the crowd could reach 100,000.

So, on a beautiful spring day, with an estimated 200,000 people breaking into raucous chants of "*¡Sí Se Puede!*" on the National Mall, there was reason for optimism. "I walked and walked and walked," a man behind me excitedly told his wife and daughter in Spanish. "Finally I found the end of the crowd—way back there!" He pointed toward the Washington Monument and the general direction of his travels, but all his family could see was a solid wall of people, many of them teenagers proudly wearing Undocumented and Unafraid T-shirts.

Yet while the March for America was, as Deepak Bhargava of the Center for Community Change told the crowd, "the biggest mobilization on *any* issue since Barack Obama was inaugurated president," it was also something of a disappointment. "My wife said it didn't even make the news," a friend told me as we traveled back to New York City that evening. "How is that possible?" It was possible, of course, because television cameras were glued to the negotiations in the House over the healthcare bill, certainly a momentous occasion. As a result, many Americans had no idea that nearly a quarter-million people—overwhelmingly Latino immigrants—had turned out to press for action.

But for those attending the demonstration, it was clear that the same energy that animated marchers in 2006 is definitely *back*. The feeling among the crowd was a healthy mix of hope and anger, along with an unmistakable sense of mission.

"Obama promised us he would be on our side," said Juan Carlos, a slender Mexican immigrant who had come from Chicago with members of his church, referring to the president's pledge to move on immigration reform in 2010. "We're here to make sure he keeps his promise." I heard the same comment from a number of people, and countless homemade signs echoed the sentiment—but this wasn't message discipline as much as a widely and deeply held belief. Now, following the large but largely overlooked demonstration, the trick will be harnessing that belief into sustained political action in the coming months.

Despite the unfortunate timing, it's important to remember how quickly grassroots organizing and sharp public criticism have forced Obama to shift his tone. Less than two months ago, in his State of the Union address, Obama made only the most general allusion to immigration reform, stating blandly that we should "secure our borders, enforce our laws and ensure that everyone who plays by the rules can contribute to our economy and enrich our nation." Translated, it was easy enough to read this as: immigrants' rights are not a priority.

On Sunday afternoon Obama's tone was decidedly more urgent when he addressed the crowd via a prerecorded video appearance on the large screens. "I pledge to do everything in

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Noted.

PUBLIC OPTION, REMIXED: Think of the healthcare legislation **Barack Obama** signed into law on March 23 as the frame of a building that's far from finished. The serious work on the project of extending healthcare to all Americans and controlling insurance and pharmaceutical industry abuses remains to be done. Congressman **Alan Grayson** understands this.

Even as he argued for passage of the landmark legislation, he took the next step—introducing a **Medicare You Can Buy Into** bill as part of a reformulated public-option strategy that, in Grayson's words, is designed "to provide real competition to the private health insurance companies."

His strategy: allow Americans to buy into the Medicare program at cost. "You want it, you pay for it, you're in," he explains. In a matter of days, Grayson had attracted more than 50,000 signers on a petition backing the bill, and eighty House members had signed on as co-sponsors. JOHN NICHOLS

TERRORIST TV? In December the House passed a bill to sanction and label as terrorists Arab satellite providers that air "anti-American incitement to violence in the Middle East." Though the bill targets the channels of **Hamas**, **Hezbollah** and other designated terrorist organizations, its broad language has been criticized as an attack on media expression in the Arab world.

Barely reported in the American press, the proposed legislation has simmered in Arabic newspapers and talk shows. In late January Arab information ministers met in Cairo, where they summarily denounced the bill, although the **Arab League** has been mulling over its own plans for increased satellite censorship.

HR 2278 defines anti-American incitement to violence as "the act of persuading, encouraging, instigating, advocating, pressuring, or threatening so as to cause another to commit a violent act against any person, agent, instrumentality, or official of, is affiliated with, or is serving as a representative of the United States." The bill directs the president to submit an annual report to Congress with "a country-by-country list and description of media outlets that engage in anti-American incitement to violence" as well as a list of the satellite providers that carry such broadcasts.

But it is the provision to tag as terrorists "satellite providers that knowingly and willingly contract with entities designated as Specially Designated Global Terrorists" that rattles observers. "Take something like **Khaled Meshal**, who's the political leader of Hamas," **Marc Lynch**, an Arab media specialist at George Washington University, told WNYC. "No self-respecting Arab TV station can afford to not interview him. So if they're going to define any contact with Khaled Meshal as incitement to anti-American violence, then pretty much every TV station would have something to fear."

Reporters Without Borders condemned the resolution as "discriminatory" and lacking "clarity." The bill "contradicts American support for media freedom and could not be implemented in the Middle East today as crafted without causing great damage," the organization said in a statement.

The bill passed by a wide margin of 395-3 in the House. The "nays" were two Texans, Democrat **Eddie Bernice Johnson** and Republican **Ron Paul**, and Democrat **Mike Honda** of California. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee is reviewing the measure. FREDERICK DEKNATEL

MEDIA MONOPOLY: During **George W. Bush**'s presidency, when Republicans controlled the White House, Congress and the FCC, media reformers succeeded in building a left–right coalition to oppose FCC chair **Michael Powell**'s moves to lift barriers to consolidation of media ownership. When the FCC voted 3-2 to lift the cross-ownership ban—which blocked newspapers from buying broadcast outlets and setting up one-size-fits-all newsrooms—there was an outcry from Congress, and the Third Circuit Court of Appeals blocked the rule change.

Four years later, Republicans on the FCC pushed through a partial relaxation of the ban on cross-ownership in any of the nation's top twenty markets. And the Third Circuit has now allowed the change to go forward. It's a bad decision that threatens to reduce the number of newsrooms and put more reporters out of work in communities that have already suffered from the downsizing of journalism. New FCC chair **Julius Genachowski** and his fellow commissioners need to signal directly—and as part of the FCC's current policy review—that the agency wants more diversity, more competition and more journalism in the nation's largest cities. JOHN NICHOLS

TEXAS TEACHER: The **Texas Board of Education**'s attempt to rewrite history through red-colored, conservative glasses is by now infamous. References to **Harriet Tubman** were eliminated and replaced by **Clara Barton**; the role of **Thomas Jefferson** was reduced, while those of conservative leaders like **Ronald Reagan** and **Phyllis Schlafly** were augmented.

Thankfully, there's **Rebecca Bell-Metereau**, a teacher and the Democratic board of education candidate in District 5, which represents fifty-one independent school districts and a half-million children. In November she'll face **Ken Mercer**, the Republican incumbent and social conservative who supported all the curriculum changes.

In March 2009 the board passed a provision encouraging students to question scientific theories, including evolution. To his opponents, Mercer wrote in the *San Antonio Express*, "Where is the evidence for one species changing to another?" In a TV broadcast, Mercer claimed his district did not want "how to" sex education discussing contraception—a claim quickly debunked by polls showing the exact opposite.

Bell-Metereau has been a teacher for almost thirty years, having taught students in the **Peace Corps** and now English and film at **Texas State University**. She has been instrumental in lowering the Texas college dropout rate, having spearheaded initiatives to increase preparedness.

She speaks from experience of being a teacher and even instructing teachers. "My plan is to work hard and to have a very simple message," says Bell-Metereau. "We need someone who is more moderate. We need a teacher who has been working on education issues for the last thirty years." CLARISSA A. LEÓN

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my power to forge a bipartisan consensus this year," he said. "This won't be easy, and it won't happen overnight."

That's a lesson immigrants have already learned, of course, beginning with Obama's initial reluctance to champion reform and the increase in deportation proceedings during his administration. And it's clear that the march was only an opening salvo. Already, plans are in the works for large demonstrations nationwide on April 10 and again on May 1; the second wave of actions will coincide with the release of a report card by the Reform Immigration for America Campaign grading politicians on where they stand on the issue—an evaluation that should command attention, given the growing clout of Latino voters.

Remaining vigilant is also a task for advocates who are dissatisfied with the proposed reform framework and oppose the inclusion of an expanded guest-worker program prone to labor abuses and the introduction of nefarious-sounding measures like the "biometric Social Security cards" recently praised by Senators Lindsey Graham and Charles Schumer in the *Washington Post*. And beyond specific policy improvements, progressives need to push back against language in the debate that tends to paint undocumented immigrants as guilty of anything but attempting to improve their lot. As Graham and Schumer wrote in the *Post* about their proposed legislation, undocumented immigrants "would be required to admit they broke the law and to pay their debt to society." There's another case to be made: *we* owe a debt to *them*.

But however much one might feel the current proposals fall short, it can't be denied that the massive turnout breathed new life into a movement that seemed to have fallen by the wayside. Another heartening sign was the diverse range of groups represented—from organized labor, churches and community groups to the NAACP and the National Urban League. The involvement of the last two organizations is especially important, highlighting the fact that immigrants and African-Americans are both served by legislation that brings millions of workers out of the shadows, which will raise workplace standards for all.

As organizers are clearly aware, with unemployment officially at nearly 10 percent, it is crucial to tackle head-on the notion that the economic downturn should take immigration reform off the table. Indeed, plenty of recent analysis points to immigration reform playing a positive role in jump-starting an ailing economy. The libertarian Cato Institute issued a report last year concluding that reform would add roughly $180 billion to the economy per year. In January a study by UCLA's Raúl Hinojosa-Ojeda, released by the Immigration Policy Center and the Center for American Progress, concluded that reform would add $1.5 trillion over the next decade while boosting wages for native-born and newly legalized workers.

It was impossible not to contrast Sunday's march with the ugliness of the previous day, when a thousand tea partyers angrily denounced Obama at a "Kill the Bill" rally against healthcare reform, at the Capitol. When African-American Representative Emanuel Cleaver walked by, one of the protesters spit on him; others shouted "nigger" at Congressman John Lewis, a civil rights icon who said the episode reminded him of another time. That same day, more enraged protesters screamed "faggot" at Barney Frank. Twenty-four hours later, a crowd 200 times the size and infinitely more diverse cheered the words of Representative Luis Gutierrez, who introduced reform legislation in December and has been a leading advocate for national legislation. "We've listened quietly," he told them. "We've asked politely. We've turned the other cheek so many times our heads are spinning. It's time to let immigrants come out of the shadows into the light and for America to embrace them and protect them." GABRIEL THOMPSON

Gabriel Thompson's latest book is Working in the Shadows: A Year of Doing the Jobs (Most) Americans Won't Do *(Nation Books). He can be reached through his website, wherethesilenceis.org.*

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

A Guide to Discussing the News for Responsible and Serious-Minded Citizens

Our healthcare's finally getting well.
But houses still are hard to sell.
Employment programs still won't gel.
And ice caps melt away pell-mell.
So therefore, people, truth to tell,
One shouldn't dwell upon Rielle.
But, still…

Iraq After the Elections

It's tempting to point to the March 7 elections in Iraq as a sign that an American-fostered democracy has put down roots in that shattered nation. But the reality is different. Despite signs that many Iraqis are disenchanted with ethnic and sectarian politics and long for a secular and nationalist Iraq, the vote still broke sharply along communal lines, leaving simmering and potentially violent divisions unhealed. Virtually all Kurds voted for Kurdish parties in the three northern provinces and in the multiethnic border provinces that straddle the Arab-Kurdish line. Nearly all Sunnis voted en bloc for the coalition led by former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi, a secular Shiite who appealed broadly to disenfranchised Sunnis, supporters of the former Baath Party, and Arab and Iraqi nationalists opposed to Iran's influence. And the vast majority of Shiites, who make up about 60 percent of the electorate, voted either for Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, who leads the secretive Shiite religious Dawa Party, or for an even more fervent Shiite religious bloc,

COMMENT

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the Iraqi National Alliance (INA), put together in Iran last year, whose leaders include Muqtada al-Sadr's movement, the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, and Ahmad Chalabi.

Not only is Iraq still split along communal lines; the aftermath of the election has renewed concerns that those divisions could escalate into violence, even civil war, during the coalition-building, likely to drag on for many months. With nearly all the votes counted, the rival blocs led by Maliki and Allawi are evenly matched, with each expected to get about ninety seats in the 325-member National Assembly. The Kurds will accumulate about fifty seats, and the Shiite-religious INA perhaps seventy.

In a more politically mature nation—say, one whose polity was not destroyed by US invasion, subsequent insurgency and then several years of horrendous civil war—the politicians who lead those blocs could form a coalition. But in Iraq a peaceful outcome is not at all certain. The Kurds and the INA have powerful paramilitary forces, and Maliki has shown he is prepared to use the security forces to do his bidding. And Sunnis, many of whom supported the 2003–07 insurgency, could rebel again. Even if the worst is avoided in the immediate future, Iraqi politics is a Rubik's cube of which it's hard to imagine a stable, ruling alliance forming the necessary majority in the National Assembly.

Iraq poses a difficult challenge for the United States, and President Obama faces unpalatable choices. At best, the next Iraqi government will be fragile and plagued by terrorism and violence. At worst, the country will fall back into a three-way civil war. Although the United States is mostly to blame for Iraq's tragic predicament, it's far too late for Washington to try to regain its role as post-2003 power broker. Whatever problems Iraq faces are going to have to be solved, first and foremost, by Iraqis themselves. The story of Iraq since 2003 contradicts Colin Powell's oft-cited Pottery Barn rule: we broke it, but we *don't* own it.

Obama must also resist calls from various quarters in Washington to slow or reverse the drawdown of US forces. Under the terms of the Status of Forces Agreement, signed during the waning months of the Bush administration, all US forces must leave Iraq by the end of 2011. Upon taking office, Obama added that he would reduce US forces to no more than 50,000 by this August, and he reconfirmed the plan to withdraw the rest by the end of next year. But Thomas Ricks, a former journalist now at the Center for a New American Security, has suggested that Washington must plan to "keep 30,000 to 50,000 [US] service members in Iraq for many years to come," and his view is echoed by conservatives, neoconservatives and Republican politicians who'd like nothing better than to blame Obama if Iraq unravels in the future. In particular, Senator John McCain, who was a principal proponent of the 2007 "surge," called on Obama to "be flexible in implementing the withdrawal of US forces," making it conditional on the "high performance of Iraqi's government."

As recently as this year's State of the Union address, Obama reiterated his plan to remove US troops, and it would be foolhardy to change plans now. Whatever stability there is in Iraq depends on the widespread conviction that the occupation is coming to an end, and no Iraqi government could turn around and invite US forces to stay. Besides, Obama was elected in part because of his promise to bring the troops home, and it would be politically costly to maintain a large US force in Iraq—a problem made even more difficult because the Pentagon wants those troops for the growing US presence in Afghanistan.

Not that Washington should just walk away. Much of what happens in Iraq is the result of involvement by Iraq's neighbors—not only Iran but Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria and Turkey. As troops depart and US leverage decreases, Iran's power in Iraq is likely to rise, and other neighbors may step up their support of favored parties. The Obama administration, along with the UN, is dutybound to use vigorous regional diplomacy with Iraq's neighbors to help reduce the likelihood of civil conflict. Above all, that means Obama must redouble efforts to reach an understanding with Iran. No Iraqis, regardless of their politics, want their country to become a battlefield between Washington and Tehran over Iran's nuclear program and its role as a regional power in the Persian Gulf. But that's exactly what could happen, especially if an overtly pro-Iranian government emerges in Baghdad. If there is any hope of long-term stability and development for Iraq, it will depend to a great extent on an understanding between the United States and Iran that neither party intends to fight a proxy war on Iraqi territory. ROBERT DREYFUSS

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Our slide show **The Road to Healthcare Reform** takes readers behind the scenes of this historic achievement.

In **Washington's Indonesian Bully Boys**, Allan Nairn reports that the Obama administration may renew aid to the Indonesian army's notorious special forces—which have been implicated in a recent assassination campaign.

On **The Breakdown**, Christopher Hayes asks Heather McGhee of Demos: does Senator Chris Dodd's financial reform package deliver on consumer protection?

Watch *Nation* contributor Eric Foner defend history, and disagree with the Texas Board of Education, on **The Colbert Report**.

Across the country, the temperature in immigrant communities is rising—and at a recent day of protest, Washington felt the heat, writes Gabriel Thompson in **Immigrants to Obama: It's Time**.

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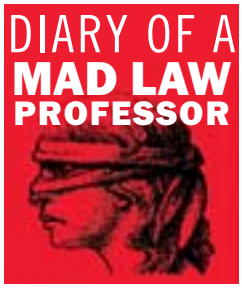
Patricia J. Williams

The Hidden Cost of DNA Banking

In March 2009, Lily Haskell was arrested while attending an antiwar demonstration. Within hours she was released. Although she was not charged with any crime, her arrest alone was sufficient for her to be required to submit a DNA sample. The ACLU of Northern California filed a lawsuit on her behalf, challenging the constitutionality of the statute mandating police to retrieve and retain DNA from anyone arrested for a felony. As Michael Risher, Haskell's attorney, asserted, the statute subjects innocent Californians to "a lifetime of genetic surveillance" with no judicial oversight, simply because they might have wandered into the field of suspicion of a single police officer.

The collection of DNA has mushroomed in the past five years. California has the third-largest forensic DNA database of any government entity in the world (behind Britain and the US government). All three collect DNA from arrestees regardless of guilt. All three have databases highly skewed by race and class. In Britain 42 percent of black men have had their DNA sampled and stored. Until recently, however, forensic DNA samples were retained only from convicted felons who had committed violent or sexual offenses. With very little oversight or consistency, local rules for collection in criminal cases have expanded haphazardly, often including anyone who is arrested even mistakenly. People may challenge the retention of their DNA and sue to have it expunged, but that process can take years.



On March 6 of this year President Obama appeared on *America's Most Wanted* to announce support for taking DNA from all arrestees, for banking that data and for keeping it without restriction even if there is no subsequent conviction. Undoubtedly it would have been much more controversial if he'd advocated DNA collection for all citizens, but his proposal seems to have slipped under the radar when framed as "only" for arrestees. By this metric "innocence" becomes a matter of degree, with certain people less innocent than others, marked by suspicion, kept on file, looked at first, disproportionately subject to the vicissitudes of laboratory and storage error. And even if mistakes are rare, it is exceedingly hard to persuade anyone of that if you are tossed in with a category the public deems inherently suspicious.

Obama and John Walsh, the host of *America's Most Wanted*, endorsed the patently false idea that DNA is no different from fingerprinting. DNA samples can potentially reveal data about all kinds of other aspects of the self, including probabilities for certain health conditions, and can potentially implicate close family members. Employers and insurance companies are already hungering for DNA analysis that may allow them to refuse jobs or coverage to those with the mere hint of genetic predisposition to certain medical conditions (never mind pre-existing conditions).

In addition to the invasion of privacy, we must also weigh the possibility of technical mistakes. As a report from the National Research Council observes, "There is no uniformity in the certification of forensic practitioners, or in the accreditation of crime laboratories." That measure of human error is never conveyed in narratives touting the perfect infallibility of DNA evidence.

Furthermore, while DNA has been vaunted as a revolutionary tool of exoneration—in ruling out suspects, in other words—it is much less precise as a mechanism of positive identification when dealing with "cold hits," that is, attempting to match DNA fragments from a crime scene against samples stored in massive databases. Bioethicist Erin Murphy clarifies the point by comparing DNA typing to blood typing: "Imagine a murder scene at which police find a blood sample certain to belong to the killer. Crime scene technicians…show that it is type O. Later, the police find and draw blood from two suspects. One suspect is type AB; the other is type O. We can, with unreserved confidence, say that the first suspect is not the killer; but regarding the second suspect, we can only say that she is included within the class of people that includes the killer. The probability that she is the actual killer turns on how many other people have that blood type, along with any other evidence that we might be able to adduce."

Finally, we risk sacrificing the American credo of free will: that we endeavor and achieve even when such accomplishment may be against otherwise calculated odds. DNA, for example, is being collected privately from those who submit samples for genetic ancestry tracking or from young professionals who pay thousands to outfits like 23andMe in exchange for overly deterministic pronouncements about "the gene for" this or that. This collection and storage of DNA by private means is thoroughly unregulated. The Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008 prohibits insurers and employers from using genetic prediction in hiring or coverage, but the act is easy to circumvent. For example, every time we dispose of a coffee cup or a hangnail, that "garbage" is open to the exploitation of others, including police. Few who contract with genetic ancestry tracking or "personalized medicine" companies realize that their profit is derived both from consumers and from reselling their samples out the back door, in supposedly "anonymized" form, to research institutions and insurance companies. "Anonymized" means that names, addresses, Social Security numbers and birth dates are kept confidential. But less than 1 percent of the information that the human genome contains has been reliably decoded. The day is surely not far away when names and Social Security numbers will be quaintly unnecessary in pinpointing identity.

We are at the very beginning of a scientific revolution that will no doubt profoundly unsettle certain notions of privacy and bodily integrity. The rampant, unreflective "bio-prospecting" occurring in public law-enforcement agencies and at private-sector data-mining companies should give us pause. ■

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Eric Alterman

Will ABC Let Amanpour Be Amanpour?

In choosing Christiane Amanpour to host *This Week*, ABC News has done something not only right but also brave. Giving the show to a tireless reporter with an avowed commitment to "make foreign news less foreign and link it with domestic policy" puts ABC in a position to break open a paradigm for the Sunday interview programs that has held sway since NBC's *Meet the Press* began in 1947.

The appointment must have come as a shock to the cozy world of Washington insiders, who would have been much more comfortable with one of their own, such as network correspondent Jake Tapper, *Nightline* co-anchor Terry Moran or former Bush adviser turned ABC analyst Matthew Dowd. In reporting Amanpour's hiring, *Politico*'s Michael Calderone correctly observed, "It's an unlikely moment for a host lacking experience in covering Washington politics to take the reins, and another reason the hire struck some staffers as coming out of left field." Unlikely and decidedly welcome. Amanpour's entire career stands in almost perfect contrast to the increasing "*Politico*-ization" of the news, with its laserlike focus on what happened five seconds ago and what that will mean for the next fifteen minutes.

Typically, the Sunday shows function as a corollary to a David Broder column or a Sally Quinn dinner party. While ABC's recent roundtables have expanded the political universe ever so slightly—offering seats to liberals like E.J. Dionne, Paul Krugman and *Nation* editor Katrina vanden Heuvel—your typical Sabbath Gasbag understands that he must stay in the Cokie Roberts/George Will safety zone of conservative conventional wisdom. In the past this meant generally strong support for the need to impeach Bill Clinton, make fun of Al Gore, cut taxes on the rich and, of course, invade Iraq without asking too many pesky questions. And the most popular guests of late have been similarly pitched, with Newt Gingrich, John McCain and Joe Lieberman among the bookers' not-so-surprising favorites.

Demands of comity and good manners take precedence over journalism unless it comes in the form of reporting a prescripted announcement or a silly gaffe. This coziness was neatly captured when NBC's David Gregory appeared at the 2007 Radio and Television Correspondents' dinner as a dancing backup singer to "rapper" Karl Rove—a Pip to Turd Blossom's Gladys Knight—only to be granted the host's job of *Meet the Press* not long afterward. (So, too, with the late Tim Russert's admission that it did not occur to him to ask Scooter Libby any substantive questions when Libby called him during the Plame/Wilson affair, reportedly to try to smear MSNBC's Chris Matthews as an anti-Semite.)

Amanpour has spent the past twenty-seven years in a different world entirely. At CNN, she has famously occupied herself not with moronic insider gossip but with war, famine and mass rape. Profiled in 1994 in *The New York Times Magazine*, Amanpour could be found pitching a tent next to the airstrip in Goma, Zaire, having flown in from Port-au-Prince. Describing how "bodies littered the ground for as far as one could see in any direction" amid the overpowering "stench of rotting flesh and human waste," reporter Stephen Kinzer aptly concluded, "Like perhaps no other reporter on American television, Amanpour seems to belong in such places."

Amanpour has made a career not of toadying to power but challenging it. "Mr. President, it's a privilege to address you from Sarajevo," she said via satellite to Clinton before he decided to intervene militarily in the Balkans. "You tonight just said that Bosnia was just a humanitarian catastrophe. Surely, sir, you would agree it is so much more than that, a fundamental question of international law and order. You also said that it is clearly in your national interest, the US national interest. So my question is, as leader of the free world, as leader of the only superpower, why has it taken you, the United States, so long to articulate a policy on Bosnia?"

While Amanpour does not exactly have a politics—right-wingers pretend that she's a left-winger because she does not eschew reporting facts inconsistent with their various biases, while many on the left believe her to be a prisoner of a narrow, NATO-style paradigm—she does not take refuge in the age-old dodge that "objectivity" demands neutrality. Speaking of Bosnia, she once explained, "There are some situations one simply cannot be neutral about, because when you are neutral you are an accomplice. Objectivity doesn't mean treating all sides equally. It means giving each side a hearing."

A refugee from the Iranian revolution, she has no taste for violent upheaval in the service of lofty ideals, whether put forth by the Serbs in Sarajevo or the Bush administration in Baghdad. "It's all about money and power and nothing else. Whatever anyone says, it's just about power," she once explained. Nor is she afraid to criticize her profession, including her own network. In September 2003 Amanpour spoke out publicly and said CNN had been bullied by the Bush administration and Fox News, which had created "a climate of fear and self-censorship." Professional journalists, she later observed, failed "to do our duty, which is simply to ask the hard questions, to stay on it, to fact-check and to cross-check and not just to take one version of the story hook, line and sinker."

ABC News president David Westin spoke the truth when he said, "With Christiane, we have the opportunity to provide our audiences with something different on Sunday mornings." The program's executive producer, Ian Cameron, promises, "You will see less of the sort of default talking points–type programming." If true, then the difference between what has so far been typical Sunday fare and a show that reflects the journalistic values of Christiane Amanpour are almost as great as that between a White House occupied by George W. Bush and one directed by Barack Obama. So the real question is, Does ABC really have the courage to let Amanpour be Amanpour? ■

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THE MAD TEA PARTY

RICHARD KIM

How Glenn Beck & Co. trumped up a vast left-wing conspiracy: the "Cloward-Piven strategy."

Leftists like to say that another world is possible, but I was never quite sure of that until I started reading tea party websites. There, a government of leftists is not only possible, it's on the cusp of seizing permanent power, having broken American capitalism and replaced it with a socialist state. Down that rabbit hole, Barack Obama and Rahm Emanuel are communists, and "The Left"—which encompasses everyone from the Democratic Leadership Council to Maoist sectarians—is a disciplined and near omnipotent army marching in lockstep to a decades-old master plan for domination called the "Cloward-Piven strategy" or, as of January 20, 2009, "Cloward-Piven government."

What is this plot? According to David Horowitz, who apparently coined the expression, Cloward-Piven is "the strategy of forcing political change through orchestrated crisis." Named after sociologists and antipoverty and voting rights activists Richard Cloward and Frances Fox Piven, who first elucidated it in a May 2, 1966, article for *The Nation* called "The Weight of the Poor: A Strategy to End Poverty," the Cloward-Piven strategy, in Horowitz's words, "seeks to hasten the fall of capitalism by overloading the government bureaucracy with a flood of impossible demands, thus pushing society into crisis and economic collapse." Like a fun-house-mirror version of Naomi Klein's Shock Doctrine theory, the Cloward-Piven strategy dictates that the left will exploit that crisis to push through unpopular, socialist policies in a totalitarian manner.

Since Obama's election and the financial crash of 2008, Horowitz's description has been taken up by a clutch of tea party propagandists—from TV and radio hosts Glenn Beck, Rush Limbaugh and Mark Levin to *WorldNetDaily* editor Joseph Farah, *National Review* editor Stanley Kurtz and *The Obama Nation* author Jerome Corsi—to explain how both events could have happened, here, in the U-S-A. In their historical narrative, it was Cloward and Piven's article that gave ACORN the idea to start peddling subprime mortgages to poor minorities in the 1980s, knowingly laying the groundwork for a global economic meltdown nearly thirty years later. Beck calls Cloward and Piven the two people who are "fundamentally responsible for the unsustainability and possible collapse of our economic system." It was Cloward and Piven who had the diabolical idea of registering (illegal or nonexistent) poor and minority voters through Project Vote and the Motor Voter

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Act, thus guaranteeing Obama's "fraudulent" victory. And it is the Cloward-Piven strategy that guides the Obama administration's every move to this day, as it seeks to ram through healthcare reform, economic stimulus and financial regulation (all of which, in reality, have enjoyed majority support in many polls taken during the last two years).

As proof, Beck & Co. point to what they see as a shadowy web of associations: Cloward and Piven worked in alliance with welfare rights organizer George Wiley, who mentored Wade Rathke, who went on to found ACORN, which sometimes coordinated registration drives with Project Vote (whose board of directors Piven just recently joined), a previous incarnation of which employed Obama to run a Chicago chapter in the early '90s. They also repeatedly cite Emanuel's statement, made in November 2008 after the passage of TARP but before the stimulus, that "you never want a serious crisis to go to waste." From *The Nation*'s pages to the White House's brains and muscles—it took only forty-four years!

All of this, of course, is a reactionary paranoid fantasy. Rahm Emanuel is no more Frances Fox Piven's stooge than Obama is a Muslim. But the looniness of it has not stopped the Cloward-Piven conspiracy theory from spreading across tea party networks. And the left's gut reaction upon hearing of it—to laugh it off as a Scooby-Doo comic mystery—does nothing to blunt its appeal or limit its impact. In order to respond, alas, we have to understand, and that means going through the looking glass.

Beck says that Cloward and Piven are 'fundamentally responsible for the unsustainability and possible collapse of our economic system.'

Horowitz first wrote of the Cloward-Piven strategy on his website Discoverthenetworks.org, which claims to be "a guide to the left." His description is a crude and false account of what Cloward and Piven argued. For example, the words "capital" and "capitalism" never appear in their article. The piece is about precipitating a crisis in the welfare system by legally enrolling masses of eligible recipients, which the welfare bureaucracy could not handle, thus creating a demand for more radical reforms, like a guaranteed minimum income—a proposal that Nixon, of all people, floated in 1969 and that, in fact, Democratic-majority Congresses voted down through 1972 [see Peter Edelman and Barbara Ehrenreich, page 15]. Moreover, as Piven recently explained to me, although the article was written as a strategic thought experiment, in many ways it described and reacted to changes already sweeping the nation, chief among them the civil rights and welfare rights movements, which created newly politicized constituencies to which the Democratic Party had to respond. "The mainstream," Piven says, "was responsive to the idea that we could end poverty because of these movements." In short, the stresses placed on the welfare system were caused by a confluence of factors, of which an article published in *The Nation*, it is safe to say, was but one, and most likely a minor one at that.

Nevertheless—history and facts be damned—it is Horowitz's caricature of Cloward-Piven that is now the Rosetta stone of American politics for the tea party's self-styled intellectuals. Glenn Beck has brought up Cloward and Piven on at least twenty-eight episodes of his show over the past year. Beck is sometimes aided by a blackboard on which he has diagramed something called "The Tree of Revolution," which links Che Guevara, SEIU and ACORN's Wade Rathke to Saul Alinsky, the Sierra Club's Carl Pope, Bill Ayers and, perhaps most improbably, to White House senior adviser Valerie Jarrett. In the center of the tree's arching trunk, above SDS and Woodrow Wilson (!?) but below Barack Obama, who adorns the tree's crown, Beck has scrawled "Cloward & Piven."

Beck's tree, however, is derivative of and pales in comparison with the flow chart created by Jim Simpson, a self-described businessman and former George H.W. Bush White House budget analyst and the leading proponent of the Cloward-Piven conspiracy theory. Cribbing from Horowitz, but adding his own very special embellishments, Simpson has penned an 18,000-word, six-part exposé of the "Cloward-Piven strategy," which can be found on the websites Americanthinker.com and Americandaughter.com. I have read it so you don't have to. The central innovations of this wild and woolly compilation of right-wing myths, published in installments during the summer and fall of 2008, are to attribute nearly every past, present and future crisis to Cloward and Piven and to link them to Obama's political past and agenda. Among the schemes Simpson credits to the Cloward-Piven strategy are healthcare reform, the Employee Free Choice Act, cap and trade, immigration reform, hate crimes legislation and public financing of elections. For Simpson, the Cloward-Piven strategy is vast, vast—"a malevolent overarching strategy that has motivated many, if not all, of the most destructive radical leftist organizations in the United States since the 1960s." And beyond: somehow, Gorbachev's Crimean dacha is implicated, as are Saddam Hussein's palaces.

Most integral to Simpson's theory, however, and where his rather impressive skills as a collagist descend into the orthodoxy of Fox News, is ACORN, which he says has been "the new tip of the Cloward-Piven spear" since 1970. In what is by now a familiar right-wing story line, ACORN is responsible for the global economic crisis. By using the 1977 Community Reinvestment Act—itself a conspiratorial response to the bogus crisis of housing discrimination—ACORN enrolled masses of low-income people in subprime mortgages, creating a housing bubble that caused stock markets around the world to crash, paving the way for bank nationalization and socialism via the bailout and the stimulus. Whew! There are, of course, more than a few pages missing in this whodunit—for instance, that it was ACORN that tried to warn Congress about risky and predatory lenders; that it was too-big-to-fail banks and complex financial instruments that spread the contagion across the worldwide economy; and that in fact the banks have not been nationalized. [For a debunking of this myth, see Peter Dreier and John Atlas's "The GOP's Blame-ACORN Game," October 22, 2008.]

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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Notice of Class Action, Proposed Class Settlement and Hearing
***Becker, et al., v. District of Columbia, et al.*, Case No. 01- CV-0811 (PLF)(JMF)**

If you were arrested on Saturday, April 15, 2000 in Washington, D.C. in connection with the IMF / World Bank related demonstrations you could receive up to $18,000 from a class action settlement

Class Counsel are the attorneys of the Partnership for Civil Justice Fund

A settlement has been proposed in a class action lawsuit about the illegality of the arrests of approximately 700 protesters and other persons on Saturday, April 15, 2000 in Washington, D.C. Many of those arrested were detained between police lines on the street, moved onto busses for extended periods of time, were in custody at least overnight, and were restrained wrist-to-ankle with plastic "flexcuffs."

Who's Included?

The class is "all persons who were detained and arrested on April 15, 2000 near the area of 20th Street, NW and I and K Streets, Washington D.C., in connection with the protest against the Prison Industrial Complex during the IMF/World Bank demonstrations."

What is Proposed?

The proposed settlement will provide up to $18,000 per class member in compensation. Attorneys fees will be paid separately and will not be deducted from this amount. In addition, the arrests of class members will be expunged. Class Members who participate in the Settlement Agreement will receive a Court Order issued by United States District Court Judge Paul L. Friedman that will provide that "The arrest of [name to be inserted] on April 15, 2000 in the District of Columbia is hereby null and void." The D.C. Metropolitan Police Department has agreed to mandatory training of its officers and other measures to prevent recurrence.

If you are a class member, your legal rights are affected whether you act, or don't act. **Strict deadlines will apply**.

Submit a Proof of Claim Form	The only way to get a payment. **Deadline: May 17, 2010**
Exclude Yourself	Get no payment. This is the only option that allows you to ever be part of any other lawsuit about the legal claims in this case. **Deadline: May 17, 2010**
Object	Write to the Court about why you don't like the settlement. **Deadline: May 31, 2010**
Go to a Hearing	Ask to speak in Court about the fairness of the settlement. **Fairness Hearing: June 30, 2010 at 9:30 a.m., Courtroom 29A, United States District Court for the District of Columbia, 333 Connecticut Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. Judge Paul L. Friedman presiding.**
Do Nothing	Get no payment. Give up rights.

Getting More Information

This is a summary notice. More details are in the detailed class notice and the Settlement Agreement. You can get a copy of the forms and case documents and get more information:

on the internet at **www.BeckerSettlement.com**

by calling (toll-free) **1-877-567-4780**

or by writing to Becker Class v. District of Columbia Settlement, c/o Gilardi & Co. LLC, PO Box 8060**,** San Rafael, CA 94912-8060

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If Simpson's chain of events is not particularly original, his theory of intentionality is: according to him, the left, guided by the Cloward-Piven strategy, was fully aware that subprime mortgages would produce a calamitous financial bubble; it supported subprime lending not to help minorities become homeowners but to sabotage capitalism from the inside. "*The failure is deliberate*," he writes repeatedly in italics.

Like others on the right, Simpson sees Obama's election itself as a machination of ACORN, which registered millions of felons, illegal aliens and dead citizens to vote through Project Vote and the Motor Voter Act, which Cloward and Piven championed and which Bill Clinton signed in 1993. (Voter fraud seems to be Simpson's enduring preoccupation and the subject of an early 2007 article on Cloward-Piven.) By the logic of the Cloward-Piven strategy, he suggests, voter registration efforts were aimed at corrupting democracy, not expanding it. This argument depends on the denial of several key realities: that changing demographics have altered the balance of party power, that legally increasing the voting rate of key constituencies is a common and legitimate practice of both parties, and that the Republican Party consistently fails to win over minorities because of the policies it promotes. What Simpson and Beck want to cast doubt on is that the democratic process could elect Obama, or that democratic majorities would endorse the agenda Obama has proposed. In the months before the 2008 election, Simpson wrote, "It is not inconceivable that this presidential race could be decided by fraudulent votes alone."

Since Obama's inauguration, the Cloward-Piven strategy has popped up with increasing frequency in op-eds and letters in local newspapers.

Beck and Simpson have played the tea party's Paul Reveres, warning the masses of the Cloward-Piven assault. But nearly the entire orbit of tea party luminaries have taken it up in some way. In October 2008 the *Washington Times* ran an op-ed by Robert Chandler called "The Cloward Piven Strategy," and Stanley Kurtz wrote about it in *National Review Online*. Mark Levin, author of the bestseller *Liberty and Tyranny: A Conservative Manifesto*, has discussed it on multiple occasions on his radio program, as did Rush Limbaugh on the March 4 broadcast of his show. In a January 13 interview, Beck asked Sarah Palin if she had seen and believed in the case he had been making on Cloward and Piven. Palin replied, "I do. I do believe it.... It has to be purposeful what they are doing. Otherwise—otherwise I would say, Glenn, that there is no hope, that there are no solutions."

In February, Kyle Olson, a GOP hack who runs an ersatz education nonprofit called the Education Action Group, posed as a student and requested a videotaped interview with Piven, which she gave in her home. Olson posted a portion of the interview on BigGovernment.com, a website run by Andrew Breitbart, who released the "prostitute and pimp" undercover ACORN sting in 2009. Olson captures nothing so dramatic: Piven lucidly discusses homeowner civil disobedience during the Great Depression as a model for how foreclosed homeowners today could refuse to leave their homes and thus create pressure on banks to renegotiate mortgages—a strategy advocated by Ohio Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur and, yes, ACORN.

Suffice it to say, if Beck and crew believe half of this crap, they belong in an asylum in the middle of Shutter Island, where they can tend to their survival seeds and sleuth out imagined conspiracies apart from the rest of the human population. The danger, however, is that they will maroon a sizable portion of the electorate there with them. Since Obama's inauguration, references to the Cloward-Piven strategy have popped up with increasing frequency in op-eds and letters to the editor of local newspapers, including those in Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania and New Mexico. Snippets of Simpson's tome or Beck's rants appear frequently in the comments section of blogs and articles; a search for the term "Cloward-Piven strategy" generated more than 255,000 Google hits.

Why does the Cloward-Piven conspiracy theory hold such appeal? And what, if anything, does it accomplish? On one level it's entertainment. It allows believers to tease out the left's secrets and sinister patterns. Since none of the evidence that supposedly confirms the existence of the Cloward-Piven strategy is, in fact, secret, this proves rather easy to do, and so the puzzle is both thrilling and gratifying.

On another level, the theory is an adaptive response to the tea party's fragmentation. As Jonathan Raban pointed out in *The New York Review of Books*, the tea party is an uneasy conclave of Ayn Rand secular libertarians and fundamentalist Christian evangelicals; it contains birthers, Birchers, racists, xenophobes, Ron Paulites, cold warriors, Zionists, constitutionalists, vanilla Republicans looking for a high and militia-style survivalists. Because the Cloward-Piven strategy is so expansive, it allows tea party propagandists to engage any one—or all—of the pet issues that incite these various constituencies. For some, the left's "offensive to promote illegal immigration" is "Cloward-Piven on steroids." For others, it is the Cloward-Piven "advocates of social change" who "used the Fed, which was complicit in the scheme" to "engineer" the 2008 fiscal crisis. In his speech at the tea party convention in Nashville, *WorldNetDaily*'s Joseph Farah notes that Obama was just 4 when the Cloward-Piven strategy was written. "We *think*," Farah said. He paused dramatically before adding, "Without the birth certificate we really just don't know," as a sizable portion of the audience broke into applause.

Racial and class resentments, however, are never far from the surface, no matter which subject is slotted into the great Cloward-Piven conspiracy machine. The word "radical," for example, is almost always preceded by the word "black" when it can be (George Wiley), but nobody is ever called a "white radical" (Bill Ayers). Whenever grammatically possible—and sometimes even when it is not—Cloward and Piven are iden-

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tified as "Columbia professors" and Obama as a "Harvard graduate." (Beyond just heaping Nixonian scorn on elites, the Cloward-Piven conspiracy credits the left with an almost divine intelligence.)

And as of now, the Cloward-Piven strategy is most often used to put two classes of people on the tea party's enemies list: those who work for the Obama administration and those who work to increase the political power of poor people of color. (Doing both—as was the case with Van Jones—can be fatal.) It is the latter target that is particularly appalling: here is a so-called populist movement promulgating a master narrative that holds poor people to blame for the world's woes. The precise impact of this conspiracy theory and the broader movement it incites on Obama's legislative agenda is, as of now, unclear. But the toll it has taken on organizations that advocate for poor people of color could not be more stark. On the weekend the healthcare reform bill cleared the House, tea party activists descended on Washington to decry "the end of America"; their bitter pill was soothed by front-page coverage of the end of something else—ACORN announced it was on the verge of bankruptcy, the victim of what CEO Bertha Lewis called "a series of well-orchestrated, relentless, well-funded right-wing attacks."

Perhaps most critical, the Cloward-Piven conspiracy theory pushes the tea party's kettle closer to a boil. In its obsession with voter fraud and the potential illegitimacy of the 2008 election—and the democratic process itself—the conspiracy suggests a tit-for-tat strategy for victory: if the left is going to cynically manipulate the system to produce tyranny, then so will we. How? To begin, there's the tried-and-true tactic of suppressing the poor minority vote—which would next place Project Vote in the tea party's cross hairs. But why stop there? Like every good conspiracy theory, this one too is a call to arms. ■

What Really Happened to Welfare

by PETER EDELMAN AND BARBARA EHRENREICH

Glenn Beck and the tea partyers have been closing in on the true source of all of America's woes, and she is… Frances Fox Piven, noted author and political scientist, welfare advocate and co-inventor of the "motor voter" strategy to register low-income voters! Readers may be surprised to learn that, forty-four years ago, Piven and her late husband, Richard Cloward, engineered the current financial crisis and designed the Obama strategy expressed in Rahm Emanuel's statement, "You never want a serious crisis to go to waste." Nor did she do this all by herself. Among her many confederates in the vast left-wing conspiracy to overthrow capitalism and install socialism was, curiously enough, Woodrow Wilson.

The plot was hatched in an article published in this very magazine in 1966 [see Richard Kim, page 11]. Cloward and Piven noted that, at the time, large numbers of eligible people were not enrolled in Aid to Families With Dependent Children (or "welfare"), and recommended a massive effort—by civil rights groups, social service agencies, etc.—to get them on the rolls. Not only would this enrollment drive provide some badly needed help for the very poor but by imposing large spending obligations on the public sector, it would "break the system."

Here some closer reading—or any kind of reading—on the part of Beck and friends would have helped, because "the system" Cloward and Piven proposed to smash was not capitalism but the *welfare system*. Yes, they wanted more eligible people to receive welfare benefits, but at the same time they pointed out that those benefits were appallingly low, leaving many recipients without, for example, adequate furniture or winter clothing.

The heart of Cloward and Piven's argument—and here the dots were not so tightly connected—was that getting welfare to everyone who was eligible would put fiscal pressure on the states (welfare required state matching funds), which would then persuade Congress to replace it with a "guaranteed annual income," set at a dignified and adequate level, for all. At the time, this was not a wild-eyed radical goal: John Kenneth Galbraith and Paul Samuelson were for it, as was Richard Nixon, who was also, it should be recalled, a fan of national health insurance.

Consistent with the Cloward-Piven strategy, and thanks to the efforts of a robust welfare rights movement and the dedicated work of legal services lawyers, the welfare rolls increased in the late 1960s and early '70s, along with other important gains for the poor during that period. Congress enacted Medicaid in 1965 along with Medicare, and Robert Kennedy's encounter with near-starvation conditions in Mississippi in 1967 eventually led to the expansion of food stamps into a fully national program that now helps one in eight Americans. Without these and other programs, like the earned-income tax credit, poverty rates would be even higher, and poverty itself deeper, than they are today.

But welfare did not survive the '90s, much less blossom into a guaranteed minimum income. What ended welfare as we previously knew it was not the Cloward-Piven strategy but a campaign that began to emerge from right-wing think

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tanks in the '70s, when architects of what was then the "New Right" came to see welfare as a key wedge issue to help build a newly populist right. The idea was to deflect the economic resentments of middle- and working-class whites away from the powerful and onto the black urban poor, who were recast as overweight and excessively fertile "welfare parasites." Rising welfare rolls, reaching 14.2 million people in 1994, added fuel to the backlash, even though welfare was absorbing only a tiny percentage of public expenditures.

Welfare as we knew it did need reform. It did not do nearly enough to connect people to jobs and it provided far too little help to people in need. Instead, the welfare "reform" law of 1996, while placing a rhetorical emphasis on work, sent a strong message to the states that the main goal was to reduce the size of the rolls by any means possible. The new program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), which had been advanced by Newt Gingrich and his Contract With America allies, ended the statutory entitlement to assistance, meager as it was, and basically limited federally financed help to a total of five years in a lifetime.

Not every state reacted in lockstep, but enough did that the welfare rolls dropped to under 4 million in 2007. In the hot economy of the 1990s, many former welfare recipients found jobs—although in about half the cases the jobs paid less than the poverty level. And two out of five former recipients ended up with neither a job nor welfare. Most states adopted "diversion" policies that pushed would-be applicants away at the front door, and cut off people who had managed to get on the rolls for minor infractions such as failing to appear for a mandated appointment or showing up late for a work assignment. Then too, as time passed, more and more people hit their five-year lifetime limit. The rolls kept spiraling down.

In all, TANF was reaching a whopping 1.3 percent of the American people by the time the recession came along. Only 22 percent of poor children were in families receiving cash assistance in 2008, down from more than 60 percent in the mid-'90s. And six states had caseloads of 10 percent or less of poor families with children.

Nor, for those who managed to get on the rolls, were the benefits even remotely adequate. As low as they were when Cloward and Piven wrote, they are lower now. Only Alaska offers benefits that meet even half the poverty line, and at the bottom of the pile, Mississippi pays only $170 a month for a family of three, or about 11 percent of the poverty line. The idea that adding a little to such miserly offerings could undermine the work ethic, propounded in apparent seriousness by conservatives, is, to put it mildly, preposterous, and was rendered moot anyway when the market crashed and jobs began to disappear.

Massive unemployment is the real crisis, at least to everyone who does not dwell on Planet Beck. Need it be argued here that the financial meltdown of 2007–08 was not brought about by crafty political science professors and their constituents among the urban poor? It was the big finance guys—with their subprime mortgages and fancy new derivatives—who, with no help from Cloward and Piven, almost brought down the capitalist system. The groups hardest hit by the ensuing unemployment have been those who were already struggling—blue-collar workers and people of color.

One might think welfare would be playing a role in ameliorating the situation, but welfare caseloads actually fell in twenty states in 2008. By contrast, the food stamp program responded well and now reaches about 38 million people, up about 30 percent. Welfare receipt has barely reached 4 million, up about 9 percent from the low point in 2008. The difference between the two programs? There is a right to food stamps. You go to the office, and if you meet the statutory definition of need, they have to help you. For welfare, the street-level bureaucrats can, pretty much at their discretion, just say no.

Millions of Americans are in dire need. Six million have no income other than food stamps, which is astonishing, since food stamps by themselves provide help at a level that is just 37 percent of the poverty line. Not surprisingly, extreme poverty—having an income below half the poverty line, below $9,100 in 2009 terms—had already skyrocketed before the recession, from 12.6 million people in 2000 to 15.6 million in 2007, well over 40 percent of the poor and more than 5 percent of the entire population. In 2008, with the recession beginning to bite, the number swelled to 17.1 million.

The welfare 'reform' law of 1996 sent a strong message that the main goal was to reduce the size of the rolls by any means necessary.

Clearly, we need a strategy to address the crisis of the poor in this recession. We might begin by extending the emergency TANF fund created by the Obama administration's 2009 stimulus bill, which is about to expire. This would stave off benefit cuts in many states and allow continuance of the modest transitional jobs programs that some states have been able to undertake.

But the recession should also prompt a deeper look at TANF, which is up for reconsideration as soon as President Obama and Congress can get around to it. We have to make it do what a policy of cash assistance for families (mainly those headed by single mothers) should do: help adults get and keep jobs, and help them get the education and training they need to make full use of their talents and the childcare they need to be able to stay employed. But jobs are not always available, and TANF should also provide a decent safety net for families who have no other source of income, including those of legal immigrants.

What is done to improve TANF, of course, is only a small piece of a larger antipoverty strategy to increase income from work, attend to all pieces of the safety net, enact healthcare for all, deal with the crisis in low-income housing, invest in our children and attack geographic concentrations of poverty both urban and rural. But improving TANF is especially relevant to the shocking number of women and children who live in extreme poverty. If ever there was a time for a serious "conspiracy" on behalf of the poor, this is it. ■

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A Rump Group at Labor

Hilda Solis has hired a crew of smart and savvy deputies to enforce the nation's labor laws.

by ESTHER KAPLAN

In 1984, on the Wasatch Plateau in southern Utah, the Wilberg coal mine, a property of Emery Mining, exploded into flames. Witnesses described plumes of dark gray smoke billowing up into the heavens. Twenty-seven coal miners were trapped inside. By the following night it was clear none of them would make it out alive. "If hell existed," the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported, "it was down in the Wilberg mine."

David Lauriski was Emery's chief safety officer when Wilberg caught fire, an accident later attributed to numerous violations at the mine. The owners, it turned out, had been trying for a one-day production record. Seventeen years after the disaster, Lauriski became George W. Bush's first mine safety chief, a perch from which he halted a dozen new safety regulations initiated under Clinton, advocating instead a more "collaborative" approach with industry. His successor was also from private industry; during a stint as a state regulator, his lax enforcement played a role in another mining disaster, this one at the Quecreek Mine in Pennsylvania.

Now, for the first time in its history, the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA), a division of the Department of Labor (DoL), is headed by a union man, Joe Main. Main began his working life as a teenager in 1967, doing the precarious work of sinking a coal mine shaft in West Virginia. By 19 he was a mine safety committeeman, later joining the United Mine Workers' health and safety department, where he worked for decades. He was working for the union at the time of the Wilberg fire and rushed to the scene. He recalls spending four or five days there during the grueling rescue and recovery operation. "It took us a year to recover the last miner," he recalls, "and I dealt with the families a lot during that time. It's something that's stayed with me my whole life." Main was confirmed by the Senate in late October; six weeks later he launched a major national initiative to end black lung disease.

During the Bush years, the Department of Labor became a cautionary tale about what happens when foxes are asked to guard the henhouse. But since California Congresswoman Hilda Solis became labor secretary last winter, she has brought on board a team of lifelong advocates for working people—some of whom come from the ranks of organized labor—and has hired hundreds of new investigators and enforcers.

President Obama calls Solis part of his economic team, but the truth is she's not part of the daily huddle at the White House with Summers and Geithner and Orszag. She's tapped instead as a lead voice in the "jobs, jobs, jobs" choir, advocating for Obama's latest stimulus package. She has tiptoed into the realm of financial regulation, organizing a joint hearing with the Securities and Exchange Commission on the abysmal performance of target date retirement funds during the market crash, and she doles out hundreds of millions of dollars in job training funds, a decent chunk of which she has used to shape policy by channeling it to green industries. But Solis understands that her real influence lies in her power to enforce the nation's labor laws—the primary mission of the DoL. It's a role she embraced with relish at her swearing-in, where she announced with a grin, "To those who have for too long abused workers, put them in harm's way, denied them fair pay, let me be clear: there is a new sheriff in town."

ZINA SAUNDERS

Indeed, Solis threw her weight around on Capitol Hill when one key deputy, Labor Solicitor Patricia Smith, faced stiff opposition from business lobbies and the GOP. One of Smith's predecessors as labor solicitor—the nation's top enforcer of labor laws—was Eugene Scalia, son of the Supreme Court justice. Scalia's previous claim to fame was his successful campaign to block an ergonomics safety standard, using an industry-supported Astroturf group to question whether repetitive-motion injuries exist at all. As labor solicitor, he invoked the Taft-Hartley Act against West Coast longshoremen locked out by their employer (a former client) and made a habit of undermining his own agency, writing a brief supporting limits on whistleblower protections. After a one-year tour, he landed on the lush payroll of Gibson Dunn, a leading "union avoidance" firm, where he now serves as an expert on "downsizing" when not penning attacks on the Employee Free Choice Act for the *Wall Street Journal*.

Smith, on the other hand, has spent more than twenty years going to battle on behalf of vulnerable, low-wage workers, first at the New York State attorney general's office and then as the

Esther Kaplan, editor of The Investigative Fund at The Nation Institute, is the author of With God on Their Side: George W. Bush and the Christian Right *(New Press).*

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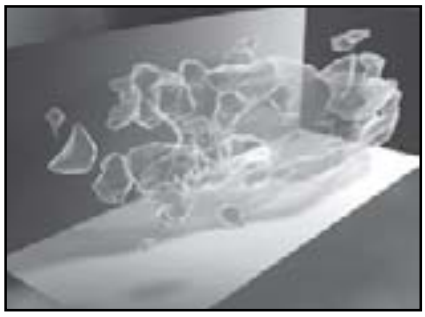

NASA, ESA and R. Massey (California Institute of Technology).

The distribution of dark matter in the universe

About Your Professor

Professor Sean Carroll is a Senior Research Associate in Physics at the California Institute of Technology. He received his Ph.D. in Astrophysics from Harvard, did postdoctoral research at MIT and UC Santa Barbara, and taught at the University of Chicago. He has received research grants from NASA, the U.S. Department of Energy, and the National Science Foundation. In 2006 he was awarded the Arts and Sciences Alumni Medallion from Villanova University.

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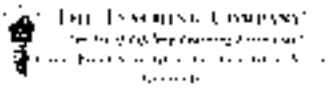

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state's labor commissioner. "She turned it from a backwater agency to a national model in just three years," says Andrew Stettner, deputy director of the National Employment Law Project. "In my career I've never seen an agency turned around so quickly." What Smith did in New York, according to labor officials, community advocates and business leaders, was to take a targeted approach not just to rogue players but to rogue industries, such as retail, residential construction and restaurants, where minimum-wage and safety violations were rampant.

She did high-profile investigations and carefully orchestrated surprise inspections, conducted special outreach to immigrant workers, and used the full arsenal of penalties, including criminal charges, to send a message to employers. Deborah Axt, legal director of Make the Road, a New York City community organization, recalls Smith doing a sweep of retail outlets in Bushwick, where investigators uncovered $200,000 in back wages owed at nineteen businesses on a single commercial strip. According to Axt, Smith was a master at leveraging her limited resources for maximum impact; her department quickly became a national model for community partnerships. And she did all this while maintaining warm relations with New York's business community. Kathryn Wilde, president and CEO of the Partnership for New York City, a leading business association, was so impressed by Smith's quick response to the tens of thousands of Wall Street layoffs in late 2008 that she wrote a letter to the Senate in support of Smith's nomination.

After Senate Republican Mike Enzi put a hold on her nomination for months, Smith was finally confirmed on February 4.

'It's fair to say that some of the president's best appointments have been at the Department of Labor.' —Bill Samuel, AFL-CIO

Or take OSHA, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Bush's final OSHA director was Edwin Foulke, a former partner at Jackson Lewis, another large unionbusting law firm, who was such a fan of voluntary compliance over enforcement that the *New York Times* called him an "antiregulatory ideologue." Shortly after joining OSHA in 2005, he began delivering a PowerPoint lecture, "Adults Do the Darndest Things," featuring images of workers near live power lines or on improper scaffolding, which he played for laughs.

Now, under the leadership of David Michaels and his deputy, Jordan Barab, OSHA's second-floor conference room features photographs of workers killed on the job. Staffers meet under the wide grin of Tyler Kahle, in his orange safety vest, who was crushed by a lift at 19, and the shy gaze of Erin Sperrey, who was beaten to death at 20 while working the night shift at a Tim Horton's. Michaels, an epidemiologist at George Washington University, is a lifelong expert on occupational health—he helped to found the New York Committee on Occupational Safety and Health (NYCOSH) in the 1970s—and on industry's use of fake science to undermine government regulations, the subject of his 2008 book, *Doubt Is Their Product*. In it, he is harshly critical of Bush's OSHA, writing that industry "alliances" and other forms of voluntary compliance "replaced any effort to strengthen weak standards and improve inspections." He writes witheringly of OSHA's handling of popcorn lung, once an extremely rare disease, which exploded in 2000 among workers exposed to diacetyl, used in buttery flavorings. The lungs of afflicted workers corroded so quickly, it was as if they had inhaled acid. Only now is OSHA finally developing a health standard on the safe use of diacetyl.

In early March, Michaels presided over a daylong forum called "OSHA Listens." At that event, industry was well represented, and Michaels gave prominent spots to speakers from the Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers, who complained that the department was "trying to scare employers by touting its enforcement agenda." But it was no accident that he scheduled them immediately after a panel of grieving women who broke down as they spoke about their husbands or sons or uncles dying in factory explosions, burns and falls.

Other tested activists are scattered throughout the department: Mary Beth Maxwell, a leader in the fight for labor law reform as head of American Rights at Work, was brought on as a senior adviser to Solis. Deborah Berkowitz, OSHA's new chief of staff, was health and safety director for the United Food and Commercial Workers. And Main's deputy for policy at MSHA, Greg Wagner, is a doctor who spent more than a decade treating miners with respiratory illnesses at a West Virginia clinic. "It's fair to say," says AFL-CIO legislative director Bill Samuel, "that some of the president's best appointments have been at the Department of Labor."

Yes, capital may reign at Government Sachs, where the shrunken paychecks of working people are tithed to subsidize the very Wall Street institutions that forced the country into recession. But in one forgotten corner of the administration, over on C Street and Constitution, at a department whose entire $1.5 billion enforcement budget couldn't pay for a single B-2 bomber, Solis has formed a rump group that's fighting on the right side of the class war.

Solis and her able deputies have inherited a Department of Labor in tatters. By the time they arrived in Washington, health and safety compliance had become all but voluntary, as had minimum wage and overtime pay. Within two months of taking office, Bush and his labor secretary, Elaine Chao, had rammed through Congress the repeal of a new ergonomics regulation that had been a decade in the making. "It was almost like PATCO [the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization] in terms of its symbolic importance," says NYCOSH director Joel Shufro, referring to Ronald Reagan's crushing of the union in 1981. "That sent employers a huge message." After that, the DoL didn't issue a single new regulation unless it was forced to by Congress or the courts. Chao not only imposed new restrictions on overtime pay; she

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produced guidance for employers on how to avoid paying it. She imposed onerous reporting requirements that applied only to labor unions. And she left behind a layer of like-minded middle managers who, AFGE Local 12 vice president Eleanor Lauderdale says, have yet to be replaced. (The new OSHA leadership recently fired a Bush-era dissident manager, Bob Whitmore, who'd been on administrative leave since 2007 for blowing the whistle on shoddy industry reporting.)

"It was eight years of neglect," says Samuel. "These were not people who believed in many of the statutes they were hired to enforce."

Facing badly depleted enforcement ranks, Solis hired 710 additional enforcement staff, including 130 at OSHA and 250 for the crucial wage-and-hour division, upping inspectors by more than a third. Another hundred will come on next year to staff a crackdown on the misclassification of millions of employees as "independent contractors"—a dodge to avoid paying taxes and benefits—a move that has set off enormous buzz on business blogs. Her team took a plunger to the stagnant regulatory pipeline, moving forward new rules on coal mine dust, silica, and cranes and derricks. She restored prevailing wages for agricultural guest workers and is poised to restore reporting rules on ergonomic injuries. She revoked Chao's union reporting requirements and countered with a proposed rule that employers who hire union avoidance firms must publicly report it, the sort of sunshine that could easily act as a deterrent. This latter measure hints at the sort of creative tactics being explored at the DoL, even as prounion legislation is stymied in Congress.

The real question, of course, is whether Solis and her dream team can do more than simply get DoL's engine humming again. To have a real impact on workers' rights, the department, despite its still token number of inspectors (it would take nearly 140 years for OSHA to visit every workplace in America) and the government's laborious rulemaking process, will have to tackle daunting tasks: tens of thousands of unregulated, potentially toxic chemicals; rampant wage theft; and an epidemic of ergonomic injuries.

Take wage theft. A recent large-scale study of low-wage workers in Los Angeles, New York and Chicago, the country's three largest cities, found that one in four (some 400,000 workers) is paid less than minimum wage; among those who work late, 76 percent are stiffed for the extra hours. This is corporate lawbreaking on a mind-boggling scale. How do a few hundred inspectors tackle that? Or look at the challenge of genuinely regulating toxic exposures: there are some 80,000 chemicals in use by American industry, which trigger hundreds of thousands of illnesses each year, yet OSHA has set exposure limits for fewer than 500, most of which are based on out-of-date science from the 1940s and '50s. Where to start? Or ergonomics. Lifting, twisting and repetitive motion stresses are the leading cause of workplace injuries, forcing a million Americans to lose time from work each year. Thousands of poultry workers are permanently crippled by carpal tunnel syndrome, while half of all nurses suffer chronic back pain, forcing many, at a time of acute nursing shortages, to leave the profession. And yet when Congress killed OSHA's ergonomic regulation in 2001, it also barred OSHA from writing a new one that was similar. How to escape that bind?

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What's so striking about the new team at DoL is, just weeks or months on the job, they're already asking these big strategic questions.

At MSHA, Main has not only come out swinging on black lung; he's launched a big-picture safety campaign he calls Rules to Live By, which involves combing through the data to identify the top causes of miner deaths. First, Main says, he'll educate mining companies about the need to eliminate these risk factors; next will come "increased enforcement," with special attention to "serious" violations, which trigger the largest fines. For Main, there's a direct correlation between hefty fines and fewer deaths. "We'll provide assistance to the mine operators who do need it," he says, "but never as a replacement to the enforcement tools. There was some confusion about that in recent years. I'm not confused about that."

Even before Michaels was confirmed at OSHA, his deputy, Jordan Barab, a widely respected expert who once ran health and safety for the public sector union AFSCME, cracked down on Nevada's state program, which had looked the other way as fatal construction accidents surged on the Las Vegas strip. Barab also issued the largest fine in the history of the agency by a factor of four—$87 million against BP Products, for failing to remedy hazards that led to a massive explosion at a Texas oil refinery, which left fifteen dead and 170 injured. At "OSHA Listens," Michaels discussed coping with his tiny enforcement staff by requiring every workplace in America to have a plan in place to identify its own unique hazards and prevent them. As for chemical exposure, he told *The Nation* that "we can't proceed on the chemical-by-chemical path" and that he is coordinating with federal scientific agencies to develop a more ambitious approach. He also said he'd immediately start issuing ergonomics citations, rule or no rule, using OSHA's broad, but extremely underutilized, "general duty clause."

Even before being confirmed, Smith was credited with sparking the national enforcement drive against businesses that misclassify employees as contractors because of her success cracking down on such scofflaws in New York—a brilliant enforcement priority at a time of budget deficits, with the potential to bring in billions of dollars in unpaid taxes, unemployment insurance and Social Security payments. But she's known especially for her insight that, as Retail union organizer Jeff Eichler, who worked closely with Smith in New York, says, "to impact an entire sector had to involve working with groups outside the bureau." She used labor unions, churches and immigrant groups as her eyes and ears on the ground; they organized plaintiffs, served as liaisons with state investigators and translated big enforcement fines into long-term gains for workers by means of union contracts or sector-wide employer manuals.

In fact, it was these efforts to use community groups as a force multiplier that triggered a furious campaign by business front groups to block her nomination. Senator Enzi obtained reams of e-mails to produce an alarmist forty-page report about one small pilot program Smith had launched, Wage Watch, which trained community members to report wage violations. Conservative groups such as the Heritage Foundation and Americans for Limited Government piled on, the latter issuing an alert that if her concept went national, "it could turn tens of thousands of 'community organizers' into raving vigilantes."

Nonetheless, at the new DoL, community partnerships are fast becoming standard operating procedure. Phil Tom, a leader with Chicago's Interfaith Worker Justice, was appointed head of the department's Office for Faith Based and Community Initiatives, which until recently was little more than a feeding trough for politically connected evangelicals. He's expected to use the office to engage the religious community on workers' rights. Likewise, OSHA is tapping labor and immigration groups to expand its enforcement reach. The agency is sponsoring a major Spanish-language conference on Latino workers' rights in April in Texas and joined local workers' rights organizations to plan a summit in Nebraska in March on safety violations in meatpacking.

Most of the DoL's new investigators are now on board, and they'll soon be in the field handing out citations. Severe GAO reports in the past two years on the failure to enforce at the wage and hour division and the undercounting of injuries at OSHA will provide political cover as these teams step up enforcement. But they are still working with antiquated tools. OSHA threw the book at Wal-Mart last May, several months after a Long Island worker was trampled to death on Black Friday—and yet the maximum fine was $7,000, pocket change to the massive retailer. The Protecting America's Workers Act would update those penalties to make them matter, including criminal culpability for top corporate officials. But the measure will face fierce resistance from the business community, as evidenced by Chamber of Commerce testimony at a hearing about the bill in mid-March claiming that its corporate accountability measures would provoke a "witch hunt." The Chamber also held a private strategy meeting in January to marshal forces against OSHA's proposed ergonomics reporting rule.

The department's new fervor for enforcement will be hobbled at every turn if the nation's most disenfranchised workers continue to feel unsafe reporting nonpayment of wages or workplace hazards. And that means immigration and labor law reform, the ultimate force multipliers. "In the end, it comes down to the power of a worker to say to a boss, This job is dangerous. I won't do it," says Joel Shufro. While Secretary Solis has sought to shift the conversation on undocumented workers from border security to exploitation, she has not yet used her bully pulpit to create a sense of urgency on moving immigration reform on Capitol Hill. She has also, so far, mostly held her tongue on the Employee Free Choice Act, which is unlikely to reappear on the embattled Democrats' legislative agenda without strong intervention by the administration.

It is an open question whether Obama will eventually unleash his feisty labor secretary to push Congress to upgrade the nation's moribund worker protections. But few observers have any doubt that the new team at the Department of Labor will do all it can with the broken laws and clunky regulatory powers at its disposal. "They know all the tricks of the trade," says Celeste Monforton, a veteran of OSHA and MSHA who is now at George Washington University's School of Public Health. "They know the Chamber of Commerce is going to come and say, This is going to kill jobs. None of that will surprise them, and none of that should make them blink." ■

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Exchange

(continued from page 2)

ship with Clorox's environmentally friendly cleaning products was like Amnesty International being funded by genocidal war criminals. The Sierra Club had ensured that these products met the Environmental Protection Agency's most stringent standard, spending four months reviewing Green Works. In the two years since the partnership began, no one has cited evidence that Green Works products do not meet the claims made for them. Rather, they are helping to increase consumer demand for green products.

Finally, we have always supported the deepest emissions cuts in line with the science and the need to convert to a new clean energy economy. This includes cuts endorsed by the Center for Biological Diversity, with whom we often join in litigation. Indeed, it was the Sierra Club that helped bring the original suit that led to the Supreme Court decision that spurred the EPA to begin regulating global warming pollution.

Carl Pope, *executive director*
Sierra Club

Washington, D.C.

"The Wrong Kind of Green" offers an inaccurate and incomplete picture of the role deforestation plays in climate change and the way environmental and conservation organizations are fighting for policies to address global warming. For the true story, see nature.org/climatechange.

Karen Foerstel, *director*
Climate media relations
The Nature Conservancy

Washington, D.C.

Johann Hari points to three principles that could make environmental advocacy groups stronger and the world a safer place for our children: (1) avoid the perceived or real conflicts of interest created by taking corporate money; (2) start with what must be done to save the environment, not with what we think we can eke out of an unfriendly Congress; (3) work bottom-up, shutting and stopping coal plants. I couldn't agree more.

For forty years, Greenpeace has maintained our financial independence, refusing money from corporations. A few years ago, Greenpeace and our allies decided to stop deforestation in the Amazon by "persuading" the major industries driving the problem to cease and desist. When we discovered that cattle ranching was a primary driver of deforestation, Greenpeace activists in the United States and Europe nudged Nike and Timberland to cancel their contracts with leather companies causing deforestation. A few canceled contracts later, the major ranching companies agreed with Greenpeace Brazil to a moratorium on any ranching that causes deforestation.

It doesn't matter if you work with companies or governments, as long as you are independent, start with the ecological goal, work globally with governments or companies to change the game and ultimately bring your opponents to a place where they'll lobby for your law or can't withstand it.

It is difficult to imagine a way forward on global warming that gets at the root of the problem—coal, the number-one cause of global warming pollution—without a plant-by-plant fight to shut down coal. Some environmental organizations have approached coal with an attitude of "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em." The Sierra Club and Greenpeace have a different approach: "beat coal until they join us."

Phil Radford, *executive director*
Greenpeace

Middlebury, Vt.

Many thanks to Johann Hari for his kind words about our work. At 350.org we aren't so much an organization as a campaign, and we look for allies everywhere. We've found them not only across the environmental spectrum but in churches, mosques, temples, sports teams and theater troupes. Our global day of action last October—which CNN called the most widespread day of political action in the planet's history—involved 5,200 demonstrations in 181 countries. We worked easily worldwide with big green groups as well as thousands of organizers from tiny local campaigns and people who'd never done anything before.

We were a little surprised at how hard it was to get buy-in to our campaign from some of the big US environmental groups. But as Hari points out, history may have played a role—these groups were set up and scaled to fight much smaller battles, doing the noble work of saving particular canyons or passing conservation laws. It's a whole 'nother level to take on fossil fuel, the center of the economy. But even if the front office of the Sierra Club didn't like what we were doing, its chapters across America and around the world engaged with the 350 campaign, helping pull off rallies and demonstrations. Which is good, because we're a tiny outfit—a couple-dozen young people and one aging writer spread out across a big planet. Immodestly speaking, we're good at what we do, but not good enough to replace other organizations. Our real strength is the amazing volunteers who make it happen everywhere—including in places you're not supposed to be able to do this work. Check out the pictures at 350.org, and you'll see that environmentalism is no longer only for rich white people. We are black, brown, Asian, poor, young—because that's who most of the world is.

One key battle that lies ahead for American groups is passing legislation to finally do something about our enormous contribution to global warming: when we talk to our organizers in Addis Ababa or Beijing or Quito, they say that US legislation is vital before anyone else will take real steps. We've learned that it's easier to rally people around bold, ambitious goals. The lobbying in Washington will go better if there's a real movement pushing senators—and that movement can only be built behind legislation that would truly change the system.

The good news is everyone gets another chance to help out, all over the world. In collaboration with our UK friends in the 10:10 movement, we've set October 10 for a global Work Party with a 350 theme, with people around the planet putting up solar panels and insulating houses. The point is to send a message to our leaders: we're doing our work, why aren't you? If we can get up on the roof of the school with hammers, surely you can do your work in the Senate, the General Assembly or Parliament. If leaders won't lead, we'll have to lead for them. We hope everyone will join in, big groups and small. Working together is fun and empowering.

Bill McKibben, *350.org*

Tucson

Johann Hari asks, Why do so many of the large environmental groups appear to take their lead on climate policy from Congress and the White House? Why do they appear to lack a bottom line on climate policy? He is puzzled by their quick endorsement of weak climate bills, their lauding of Obama's regressive position at Copenhagen and their claims that Copenhagen was a success.

He is right to be puzzled: such positioning has been a failure. Congress and the White House have taken progressively weaker positions on climate change legislation and are giving ground in the face of corporate opposition. They see little reason to move toward

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environmental groups that have endorsed weak positions and signaled that they will endorse even weaker ones.

The Center for Biological Diversity has joined groups such as Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and 350.org to establish 350 parts per million as a bright-line criterion for endorsement of any climate legislation, policy or international agreement. It is not negotiable, because the conditions that support life on earth are not negotiable.

While pushing for new, comprehensive legislation, the Center believes it is imperative that we also use existing laws—like the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act—to begin reducing greenhouse gas emissions *now*. And we must update land and wildlife management plans to ensure that imperiled species are able to survive the level of global warming that is already locked in.

We've petitioned the EPA to determine scientifically the safe level of atmospheric carbon dioxide (and other greenhouse gases), just as it does for other air pollutants. Hari describes the aggressive public opposition to the EPA's determining this safe level by a faction within the Sierra Club, which has also tried to persuade other environmental groups to ask Congress to amend the Clean Air Act to prevent the EPA from doing this.

The good news is that the Sierra Club is diverse and dynamic, and many of its leaders and chapters are strongly in favor of the Center and 350.org's petition. Recent changes in the Club's management are promising, and I look forward to working with it to reduce carbon dioxide to 350 ppm. That is unquestionably the task of our generation.

The tough questions Hari asks will continue to be posed by astute reporters as environmental groups' endorsements are being lined up for a very weak Kerry-Graham-Lieberman bill—a bill that seeks to increase oil drilling, continue coal burning and allow greenhouse gas emissions to pass irrevocable tipping points. Hari's questions are critical for our time. As environmental leaders, we would do well to use those questions for self-reflection rather than defensively dismiss them.

For the Center's efforts to combat global warming, see biologicaldiversity.org/programs/climate_law_institute/index.html.
Kieran Suckling, *executive director*
Center for Biological Diversity

Quito, Ecuador

Congratulations to Johann Hari for the courage to "out" what many have been whispering about for a long time. While we all want to see a stop to deforestation, and real progress in addressing climate change, the approach of the BiNGOs [big nongovernmental organizations] has been to double down on market-based solutions, a questionable approach given that the market, its drivers and its defenders are some of the same culprits responsible for getting us into this mess in the first place.

Many of the industry-friendly stopgap measures the BiNGOs are advocating for don't meet the threshold for emissions reductions that scientists tell us are needed. And many treat forests as mere carbon concessions, at the expense of biodiversity and indigenous rights. Given that the tipping point for forest collapse is two to ten years away, this is no time for compromise or false solutions.

We invite these organizations to address the drivers of climate change and deforestation, and make indigenous rights central to their climate change agenda. In the run-up to Cop 15, several BiNGOs committed to a "No rights, no REDD" [reducing emissions from deforestation and deregulation] position. These groups should be speaking out and withdrawing their support for REDD unless basic inalienable principles like FPIC (free prior informed consent) are included.
Kevin Koenig, *Ecuador program coordinator*
Amazon Watch

Hari Replies

London

It is a fact that Dr. Jay Hair kick-started the process of environmental groups taking money from the world's worst polluters. It is also a fact that this process has been taken much further by groups like Conservation International and The Nature Conservancy, ending with their missions becoming deeply corrupted, as I reported. My view is also the view of America's most distinguished climate scientist, Professor James Hansen; of whistleblowers from inside these organizations; and of the environmental groups that don't take money from polluters.

I accept that Hair was a fine person in his personal life and had some positive motives, and of course his early death is tragic. But people with otherwise positive motives can make horrific misjudgments. In public debate we have to be able to criticize the harm people have done, and show how it continues, or we cannot prevent more harm. The apology Leah Hair demands is in fact due from the "green" groups that are taking ever more polluter cash and betraying their own missions. If she wishes to preserve the best of her husband's legacy, she should direct her anger at them, not at journalists honestly describing how this process began.

Carl Pope, rather than engage with the issues I raised, sadly plays the old politician's trick of denying charges I did not make. Where did I say that the Sierra Club doesn't oppose coal? Nowhere. I described the facts—that under his leadership, the Sierra Club vehemently opposed a lawsuit to force government policies into line with basic climate science by returning us to 350 ppm of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Pope doesn't try to justify or explain this, although it was my single largest charge against the Sierra Club.

The Center for Biological Diversity describes this behavior as "throwing climate science out of the window," and Jim Hansen—the man Pope waves as a papal authority—describes it as "shocking" and "abominable." So, yes, the Sierra Club opposes coal in many places and at many times, as I said in my article. But it is a matter of record that when there was a lawsuit to ensure the dramatic scale-back in coal we need to preserve a safe climate, its spokesmen and legal counsel lined up with former Bush administration members to deride it. I would like to hear Pope offer an explanation for this, instead of name-calling.

Pope also gives an account of the Clorox scandal that is, alas, inconsistent with the facts. A corporation approached Pope and said it would give the Sierra Club a cut of its profits if it could use the Club's logo on its new bleach. As Christine MacDonald exposes in her book *Green Inc.*, Pope gave the go-ahead without making any effort to check that the bleach was genuinely greener than its competitors. The Club's own toxics committee co-chair, Jessica Frohman, was very clear about this, saying, "We never approved the product line." It is a disturbing example of how corporate cash has perverted the behavior of even as admirable a green group as the Sierra Club.

There is something lacking from many of these responses. Do these people feel no concern that America's leading environmental groups are hoovering up cash from the worst polluters and advocating policies that fall far short of what scientists say we need to survive the climate crisis safely? Is this the best response they can muster?
Johann Hari

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Books & the Arts.

The Crack-Up

by BEN EHRENREICH

COURTESY JORGE VOLPI

Jorge Volpi

The year 1994 was a cacophonous one in Mexico. NAFTA fell with a dull boom from the north; a gunshot took the life of the ruling party's presidential candidate; more shots echoed up from the southern state of Chiapas; the peso tripped, tumbled, crashed. With all the din, it was easy to miss the sound of what would later be described, with much fanfare, as a "crack"—a rupture dividing a small group of young Mexican novelists from the generation that preceded them, or perhaps uniting them to a still earlier generation, or dividing serious novelists from silly ones, or daring, cosmopolitan lit from provincial kitsch and pap. What exactly was cracking wasn't clear, but it was in 1994 that the young writers Jorge Volpi, Ignacio Padilla and Eloy Urroz together published a collection of novellas titled *Tres bosquejos del mal* (Three Sketches of Evil), and it was that year, according to Volpi, that the "Generación del Crack" was born.

The name did not indicate a literary devotion to cocaine's least fashionable form. It was meant, revealingly, as onomatopoeia, as if English orthography were the natural vehicle for the representation of primitive sound. (NAFTA followed a similar logic, supposing a northward flow as the natural direction of capital.) The group's formation would not become audible until two years later, when the *crackeros*, joined by Ricardo Chávez Castañeda and Miguel Ángel Palou, issued a manifesto at a cultural center in Mexico City. Theirs would be "totalizing" novels, they promised, "profound and severe with their readers." They liked Beckett and Calvino and Cervantes and Sterne and the giants of the "Boom": Cortázar and Fuentes, and García Márquez before "magical realism" became a sort of fragrant ghetto enclosing Latin American fiction. Despite the phonic violence of their name, they announced, "There would be no rupture, then, but continuity. And if there were any kind of rupture, it would be only with the chaff, the pernicious Gerber's of the moment…the cynically superficial and dishonest novel." In other words, they swore to write good books. "If something is happening with the Crack novels," the manifesto winked, "it's not a literary movement, but simply and fully an attitude."

It was also shrewd PR, an attempt to stake a claim in a publishing industry that had begun shifting drastically in the 1980s, consolidating into a few big and largely Spanish-owned houses variously infected with the virus locally known as *bestsellerismo*. We might call it Oprah-ism. It had become harder than ever for young writers of literary fiction to break into the globalized and sales figure–obsessed market, so Volpi and his comrades published novels nearly simultaneously and issued their manifesto to coincide with the releases. Each book was tagged with a crimson promotional label identifying it as a "Novela del Crack." The *crackeros*, for all their rebel posturing, were making a bid for inclusion.

The move was not, initially, well received. Mexican critics remained unimpressed until 1999, when Volpi's fifth novel, *In Search of Klingsor*, won the prestigious Premio Biblioteca Breve, awarded by the Spanish publisher Seix Barral. Volpi's sales exploded; *In Search of Klingsor* was translated into nineteen languages; the Crack manifesto was reprinted in Spain by the Barcelona-based cultural journal *Lateral*; Spanish presses discovered the novels of Volpi's less celebrated colleagues. Volpi was appointed cultural attaché to France, Padilla to Britain. Crack had gone global. At home, not everyone was buying it—in 2003 Elena Poniatowska was still mocking "Kid Volpi," and the critic Rafael Lemus has dismissed Volpi's novels as "airport literature"—but abroad, Crack had become the Nike of Mexican literature.

Season of Ash
By Jorge Volpi.
Translated by Alfred Mac Adam.
Open Letter. 413 pp. Paper $15.95.

The *crackeros*, though, and Volpi in particular, chafed at the very idea of Mexican-ness as a literary category, and at the condescending opinion announced from perches north of the border and across the Atlantic that Mexican writers should demonstrate their authenticity by writing about Mexican themes, that the universal was a commodity owned exclusively by gringos and Europeans. *In Search of Klingsor*, a reimagining of the Nazi effort to develop an atomic bomb, lacked a single reference to Mexico. The Cuban novelist Guillermo Cabrera Infante called it "a German novel written in Spanish." (He meant that as a compliment.) Volpi's next novel, *El fin de la locura* (The End of Madness), took on the utopian legacy of 1968—not in Tlatelolco but in Paris. The idea of a national literature, Volpi protested, is a nineteenth-century anachronism. A literature common to an entire hemisphere was still more absurd. "Let us be radical," he said in a lecture delivered last summer. "Latin American literature does not exist."

He's right, of course, and not just in a positivistic sense. The bonds connecting Clarice Lispector to Laura Esquivel are less than negligible. But Volpi's insistence on the obvious is not merely a statement of fact. It is also a strategic act of self-positioning. Just as Crack was not about contesting the terms

Ben Ehrenreich, a journalist and novelist based in Los Angeles, is the author of The Suitors.

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of the international literary market but of finding a way in, a way to make Crack boom, Volpi has been uninterested in challenging the smug dichotomy that awards something called universality to the global North while condemning the rest of the world to the folkloric particularities of national literatures. On the contrary, he has affirmed the paradigm: "To make a crude simplification," Volpi said in a 2004 talk, "one of the great problems of culture in Mexico has been the constant alternation between two apparently contrary paths: *mexicanidad* and universality." Volpi's choice, he has made abundantly clear, is with the latter.

This stance, of course, has its political side. In rejecting the meaningfulness of not only Mexican but Latin American literature as a category, Volpi is explicitly spurning the legacy of the leftist Boom writers who self-consciously created a Latin American literature that was both cosmopolitan and particular, that conversed with the novelistic traditions of Europe and the United States without fear of being subsumed by them. "The Latin American utopia has disappeared," Volpi contends. He displays little nostalgia for it. In his fiction and essays, he portrays the intellectual left since 1968—the year, not incidentally, of his birth—as hopelessly compromised by its silences and collusions. "Behind its well wishes, its anxiety to improve the world and its passion for utopia," says a character in *The End of Madness*, "was always concealed a totalitarian temptation. *Always*." Our inheritance, as Volpi represents it, is the familiar disillusioned world of neoliberal orthodoxy: postideological and postnational (at least for those who can afford the visa or the coyote). There is no sense rebelling, and only one team to join.

Volpi's history is lowercase and filtered through a shiny, sexy brand of determinism.

This, in broad outline, is the world of *Season of Ash*, published in Spanish in 2006 as the final installment of the historical trilogy that began with *In Search of Klingsor*, and just released here in a translation by Alfred Mac Adam for the generally excellent press Open Letter. The failure of communism, the collapse of the Soviet Union—and with it that strange and stubborn ghost, ideology—is apparently so crucial to Volpi that it must be marked repeatedly. The novel begins with a brief dramatization of the Chernobyl disaster, the USSR's first symbolic death. The giant concrete sarcophagus in which the nuclear plant's reactor is eventually sealed off, Volpi writes, is the "final legacy of communism." But it lives on to die again three years later, when the last Russian soldier retreats from Afghanistan, and again in 1990, when the first McDonald's opens in Moscow and one character announces to his wife, "We are witnessing the end of the planned economy and therefore of the Soviet Union itself!" Then one last time on New Year's Eve 1991, just after the Supreme Soviet really has dissolved itself, the couple's brooding daughter writes a letter to Anna Akhmatova: "Today is the last day of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, the last day of Communism, the last day of our era." A few pages later, in case the corpse wasn't dead enough, Volpi incinerates it. His narrator opines that—like Latin American literature—"The worst thing about the Soviet Union is that it had never existed."

It is possible that he protests too much. But why? Out of clumsiness, certainly, and ideology, of course—like a child yelling, "I'm not here!" from his hiding place beneath the bed, the declared absence of ideology is the surest sign of its presence—but also because he is keen to kill off all vestiges of what was once called History, that Hegelian-cum-Marxist understanding of humankind as a vector endowed with momentum, direction and an over-the-rainbow goal. Though Volpi lets himself be distracted by such novelistic conventions as character and plot, his main subject is a history of a different sort: decidedly lowercase and filtered through a shinier, sexier brand of determinism than the expired economic kind. After communism crumbles, the fates of Volpi's narrator and his three female protagonists coalesce around the Human Genome Project. A much-simplified Richard Dawkins is the guiding prophet here: our genes compel us. They are selfish, just as we are. "Our misfortunes do not correspond to a pre-established plan or to the designs of a Superior Intelligence," Volpi writes. "In biological terms, we are barely distinguishable from the nematodes.... We humans are simply survival machines, ephemeral redoubts against chaos, docile guardians of our genes. *That and that alone*."

The concluding italicized fragment once again begs the question. But consistent with this guiding theory (don't call it ideology), none of Volpi's characters bear much by way of complexity. Most can be exhaustively described with a sentence of backstory and an adjective or two. The book begins with the narrator, Yuri Mikhailovich Chernishevsky (courageous celebrity novelist and journalist who dared to take on the Russian oligarchs, and whose stint in the military during the Afghan war left him with a dark side), in prison for the murder of his lover, the beautiful and brilliant Eva Halász (icily passionate Hungarian-born pioneer in artificial intelligence, unapologetic in her erotic egoism), whom he shared grudgingly with Jack Wells (slick, shallow American biotech entrepreneur and unscrupulous social climber), the ex-husband of the heiress Jennifer Moore (high-powered IMF career woman whose neglect of her maternal instincts has left her bitter and repressed), who has just learned that her sister Allison (narcissistic, naïve rich-kid activist who leaps from one lefty-hippie cause to the next while neglecting her own son) was killed in the West Bank while standing in the path of an Israeli bulldozer. Really. To complete the trinity of deaths, the aforementioned couple—Arkady Ivanovich Granin (blindly egomaniacal Soviet-era dissident scientist turned Russian Federation power broker) and his now-estranged wife, Irina Nikolayevna Sudayeva (once promising biologist who believed in Arkady's idealism and gave up everything to stand beside him)—are briefly reunited to identify the body of their murdered daughter, Oksana (she of the letters to Akhmatova: sensitive, troubled, lost).

Those three deaths occur with all due symbolism on the next-to-last day of the second millennium. From that tidy, triple-zeroed year, Volpi backs into his story. Its plot is described by the interweaving, transcontinental paths of his characters, making stops in Moscow, Budapest, Baku, Berlin, Boston, New York, Washington, Sverdlovsk, San Francisco, Kinshasa, even Mexico City, which we see only through the narrow eyes of Jennifer Moore (it doesn't make a good impression). Volpi supplies briefs on his characters' youths—enough to establish a basic psychological profile and tag a few key historical moments—then telescopes lurchingly forward, often sliding past years of development in a single soap-operatic sentence, as in: "Jennifer's birth changed his life and gave him the strength to overcome the colon cancer that had left him hopeless." The individual stories don't add up to much. We know from the outset where they're headed. There is, Volpi's narrator warns the reader, no greater meaning to be found: "Because of an inscrutable principle, Irina Nikolayevna Sudayeva, Arkady Ivanovich

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You deserve a factual look at . . .

Racism in the Islamic World

How can peace prevail in the Middle East in the face of Islamic bigotry and hate? When will moderate Muslims speak out?

For years, the U.N., led by Islamic and Arab nations and their sympathizers, has accused Israel of racism and "apartheid." That is nonsense, of course. But the world consistently turns a blind eye to open, seething anti-Semitism in Islamic society.

What are the facts?

In one of the most astonishing propaganda coups ever, a United Nations conference on racism, which took place in Durban South Africa, declared that Zionism is racism. No wonder the U.S. and Israel walked out of the meeting, which was dominated by representatives of Islamic and Arab states and other anti-Israel forces, and whose conclusions were predictable from the outset.

The supreme irony of this conference was that it accused no other nation of racism—only Israel. In truth, Israel is perhaps the most racially and ethnically diverse and tolerant country in the world. More than half of Israel's Jewish population consists of people of color—blacks from Ethiopia and Yemen, as well as brown-skinned people from Morocco, Iran, Syria, Egypt and Israel itself. In addition, Israel's population includes more than one million Arabs, who enjoy the same civil rights as Jewish Israelis. In Israel hate speech is banned, and it is against the law to discriminate based on race or religion.

> "Until Muslims reject racism in all forms, they can't expect Islam to enjoy full respect as a political and spiritual force."

In contrast, anti-Semitism—a poisonous form of racism directed specifically against the Jewish people—is rampant in most all Islamic societies. Not only is anti-Semitism commonplace in Muslim nations, but it is propagated shamelessly by their leaders, in state-sponsored media, and by Muslim clergy.

For example, former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed declared in a speech to the Organization of Islamic Conference that, "today Jews rule the world by proxy. They get others to fight and die for them." Imagine if an American president had made a similarly sweeping and bigoted statement about blacks, Latinos or any other race—what a justifiable uproar, perhaps even an impeachment, would ensue. Yet there was no condemnation by the Muslim world of Mr. Mohamed's comments. Rather, virtually all of the conference's Muslim leaders actually voiced their approval.

In response to a terrorist attack in Saudi Arabia in May 2004, Crown Prince Abdullah declared that "Zionism is behind [these] terrorist actions in the kingdom." (Zionism is the code word often used by Islamic anti-Semites for Jews.) Tom Lantos, the late U.S. Congressman, called the Prince's assertion "an outrage . . . blatant hypocrisy," but Islamic leaders were silent. In fact, millions of Muslims still insist that Zionists were behind the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center.

Anti-Semitism is expressed so freely and ubiquitously in most Islamic societies that no citizen can escape it. During Ramadan a few years ago, Egypt's state-controlled TV aired "Horseman Without a Horse," a program based on the notorious forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, in which Jews allegedly use the blood of non-Jews to make Passover matzot. In Iran, a TV series, "Zahra's Blue Eyes," portrays "Zionists" kidnapping Palestinian children and harvesting their organs.

Perhaps nowhere is the hatred of Jews more virulent than among the Palestinians. Most perniciously, Palestinian children are taught in school that Jews are descended from apes and pigs and that the most noble thing they can do is to kill Jews. Muslim clerics like Imam Ibrahim Madiras, an employee of the Palestinian Authority, declared in a television sermon, "Jews are a cancer" and later that, "Muslims will kill the Jews . . . [and] rejoice in Allah's victory." No surprise, then, that the 1982 doctoral dissertation of Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas makes the astounding claim that "Zionists" collaborated with the Nazis to annihilate the Jewish people in order to drive the survivors to Palestine.

Anti-Semitism and the prospects for peace. Islamic anti-Semitism permeates the Arab Middle East and creates an atmosphere in which Jews are reviled and represented as subhuman. How can the Palestinian people embrace peace with a people represented by their religious and political leaders as dehumanized, evil beings? Even more importantly, how can Israel be expected to trust a so-called peace partner who expresses abject hatred and murderous intent toward Jews on a daily basis? Yet the U.S. and many European nations continue to demand that Israel make one-sided sacrifices for peace with a people steeped in racism and committed to its destruction.

Until Islamic leaders muster the integrity to relentlessly condemn anti-Semitism (and its evil twin, anti-Zionism), we can't expect Israel to accept a forced peace with the Palestinians. Likewise, until moderate Muslims reject racism in all forms, they can't expect Islam to enjoy full respect as a political and spiritual force among the world's people.

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Granin, and their daughter Oksana; Jennifer Moore and her sister Allison; the infamous Jack Wells; and my beloved Eva Halász formed an immaterial network, mere points on a Cartesian plane."

His protagonists, thin as they are, end up feeling like stage props in a mad, *Where's Waldo?* version of twentieth-century history. Nothing small happens in *Season of Ash*. History, it turns out, is not just a series of meaninglessly interrelated events linked only by the dumb imperatives of our DNA. It's a chain of spectacular media moments, a *Newsweek* timeline writ large. Volpi guides us past the 1929 crash, Stalin's purges, Stalin's death, the 1956 invasion of Hungary, the ascension of Gorbachev, the Challenger explosion, the AIDS epidemic, the bombing of Greenpeace's *Rainbow Warrior*, the birth of the "Star Wars" missile defense system, the flight of Mathias Rust, the founding of Earth First!, the stock market crash of 1987, the beginning of the first intifada, the introduction of Prozac and the all-important fall of the Berlin Wall.

Some of this is fascinating. Did you know, for instance, that with disastrous results, Soviet biologists and agronomists rejected Mendelian genetics as a bourgeois myth in favor of a Lamarckian paradigm that imagined environmentally acquired traits to be inheritable? And that Mendelian holdouts in the Soviet academy were sacked, tortured and jailed? If Volpi had made something more of this and other such details, if he had engaged with them and let them complicate his greatest-hits rush to the millennium, *Season of Ash* might have been riveting, as grand and complicated as its subject matter. But his treatment of the events he describes is hasty and superficial, like a string of Wikipedia entries knotted inelegantly each to each. (Quoth Jennifer, straight-faced, in 1990: "We've won the Cold War, Jack, without having to fire a single shot, and now the Russians are at our mercy.") If the teleological History of yore was more than a tad confining, the lowercase history we're left with, as Volpi depicts it, is a silly, shallow jumble.

It would be tempting to say that this is his point. Volpi clearly did not set out to write a novel of great psychological depth. At times, he seems eager to mock the very notion of three-dimensionality, as if the flatness of cliché were a more metaphysically honest aesthetic. He likes to cite numbers, and does so with an arch, anti-lyrical glee: stock market gains from 1994, Boris Yeltsin's 1996 poll results, census details from the Jenin refugee camp. His characters, you'll remember, move "like points on a Cartesian plane." And as in the Homeric epics, in which Achilles is invariably "swift-footed" and the sea always "wine-dark," Volpi hands world-historical cities and men over to trim, ironic epithets. Nearly every mention of Washington, DC, is followed by the phrase "axis of the cosmos," New York City by "navel of the world." Moscow gets the relatively drab "city of wide avenues." Gorbachev is nicknamed "shepherd of men." Bill Clinton is the "imperial seducer" and Ariel Sharon, delightfully, "a savage seal."

But *Season of Ash* does not hold up as satire. There is not enough at stake here: not enough doubt, not enough struggle, not enough warmth. Volpi is not contesting anything, and his glibness quickly gets old. The story he tells is less about his characters or whether we are slaves to our genes than about the second half of the twentieth century. His is an entirely conventional account—the brutal totalitarian nightmare of state socialism falls to a hunger for democracy and cheap consumer goods, which in turn leads to the slightly lesser but still pretty worrisome evils of capitalist inequality, corruption and anomie. This is the dominant interpretation of the moment, the figure in the carpet of nearly every editorial from the *New York Times* to *Reforma* to *El País*, and it makes for dull literature. The Crack manifesto didn't make many concrete promises, but it promised more than this. ■

Gramaphoons

by ANGE MLINKO

Cars. Rain. Alcohol. Insomnia. Money. Wind. TV. Sky. Super Target. Bones. Birds. Honky-tonk. The night. A list like this evokes vast tracts of middle America, whose most abiding cultural expression may be the country song. Country is a pure product of both the recording industry and folk music traditions dating back centuries; it typically mines the quotidian and refines it into an elegy you've been hearing on the radio all your life. Things of unutterable dreariness—strip malls and interstates but also drinking problems, marital problems—turn mournfully sweet. Its roots in America's dream life are chronicled in Greil Marcus's *Invisible Republic* (reissued as *The Old, Weird America*), which tells the story of how the earliest recordings of "race" and "hillbilly" music (which became blues and country, respectively), gathered and released by Harry Smith in 1952 on *Anthology of American Folk Music*, ignited the 1960s folk music revival and revolutionized rock music. The story has mythic dimensions, but Marcus also gives it a civic cast: this is music as "democratic speech."

Graham Foust was born in Knoxville, Tennessee, raised in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and has lived as an adult in western New York, Iowa and Oakland. His poetry partakes of this collective American imaginary and its terse vernacular style:

Full of noise and lust, they fled
the city for the shore. It was four
in the upcoming morning. Everyone
slobbered; somebody drove.
Another thirst begun, they had their
beer
in cans in bags; their hands, their feet
in frigid sand; their eardrums—make
that
their headaches—sewn with ocean.
They'd never seen a moon so willful,
so scissory, never heard the dark water
rearrange so clumsily. Crowded
future,
dingy beach. They scratched the air;
they burned and buried things.
They were the fruit they couldn't
reach.

A Mouth in California
By Graham Foust.
Flood. 71 pp. Paper $14.95.

This poem, "Their Early Twenties," is from Foust's new book, *A Mouth in California*, and it bears some earmarks of country (and rock) lyrics: drinking, driving and longing. It's also made of fourteen lines and rhymes faster than its loose tetrameter lawfully permits. (Even a loose meter, the poem shows us, functions exactly as the speed limit rhymes want to surpass.) Fourteen lines, a scumbled final couplet—a sonnet, really. And "sonnet" is just an old word for song.

As a form, the sonnet is pithy and strict, but compared with the poems in Foust's previous three books, "Their Early Twenties" is positively wordy. Here's "Night Train," from his debut book, *As in Every Deafness* (2003):

Ange Mlinko, the recipient of the 2009 Randall Jarrell Award in Poetry Criticism from the Poetry Foundation, lives in Beirut. Her most recent book of poems is Shoulder Season.

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creased, the darkness seems
exactly

the same—

someone
in one of those houses

is you

A hundred classic songs—from "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry" to "Night Moves" to "Helpless" to "In the Early Morning Rain"—haunt this fragment. It's an ode to American male vagabondage, a manifest destiny of freedom and nostalgia. Freedom to wander the tracks or the roads with a bottle (Night Train is a species of booze only winos and teenagers can stomach); nostalgia for the exile from a house and everything home represents. But the poem doesn't ramble. It has a peculiarly American (if not Protestant) succinctness, its words like bits of scrap metal scrounged from spaces of intergalactic scarcity.

A Mouth in California is Foust's fourth book in seven years. His first two books, *As in Every Deafness* and *Leave the Room to Itself*, featured poems (like "Night Train") that were formally so austere and so preoccupied with pain that they risked numbing the reader. (Or this reader, at least. For me, absence of a range of feeling in a book of poems seems more studied, not less.) Foust's austerity made him hard to place aesthetically: he had studied at SUNY Buffalo, a haven in the 1980s and '90s for poets enticed by the poststructural Language school, and his minimalism would have seemed at home there. But there was no radical indeterminacy in the work—his wrenched syntax was constrained by, and put in the service of, an afflicted soul that seemed apprenticed to the poems of Louise Glück more than those of Charles Bernstein. In his third book, *Necessary Stranger* (2007), Foust started winking at his own earnestness: for one thing, the volume opened with the trio of poems "1984," "Jump" and "Panama"—all titles of Van Halen hits from the band's heyday. The wit was a relief from the pressure of his condensery.

Necessary Stranger also dispensed with the endnotes that had, in Foust's previous two books, acknowledged borrowings from the likes of Archilochus, Wilco, Cormac McCarthy, Joy Division and Heidegger. By now his readers know the Foust MO: short-short poems, mash-ups of two kinds of knowingness (literary and musical) set against a contemporary exurban landscape suffused with loneliness, violence and erotic need, and never enough money. The borrowings are almost beside the point; Foust doesn't so much appropriate sources as embed his poems in the cultural subsoil that nourished him. ("Everything, Earth, compares to you," he quips in *A Mouth in California*, inverting the title of the hit song "Nothing Compares 2 U," penned by Prince and covered by Sinéad O'Connor.) And in one of my favorite passages, he writes:

Graham Foust

To space's constant swallow comes
a small unslaughter: a song
for once, a sliver. Be let go.

The poem is called "Outbox." In it, what is swallowed is emitted as song, and what sings is also a swallow: the bird. What goes in must come out a mouth in California.

Like many classic country songs, Foust's lyrics pivot on a moment of reckoning: a rock bottom, a bottom line, a body *in extremis*. The body is the ground of the poetry, and the body is always pushing up through an extreme intellectual demeanor of the speaker, as in "God":

Keep talking while I tend to the
lines on your face.
Keep talking while I touch your face
and keep talking through your face
and throw your face through your
face.

Similarly, in "We Arrive As If at a Picture, Pinched,"

I push throat after throat
through the bones of my ears.

There's physical violence, of course, in the repetitions of "your face" and "throat after throat." Much of the violence of Foust's work materializes in the sounds of the poem, in its tough brevity and sudden line breaks. But the violence is bodily too, and psychological, and even for someone like myself, repulsed by melodramatic violence in American movies and fiction, Foust's work is irresistibly charged. "Poem With Rules and Laws," a poem about marriage, manages to be both ironic and raw:

You don't lust
for what you
want. You lust
for what you
can get. I'll
carve you your
hankered-for
chemical
oath. I'll show
you the badge
in my mouth.

The badge in the mouth of the husband-policeman enforces the primitive vow—the kiss—that sealed the conjugal union. Its function is to take the couple out of long-term anhedonia back to that sacramental moment—and the threat of force backs it up, theatrical or not.

Marriage in *A Mouth in California* is not a bourgeois gilded cage that prevents circulation in a bountiful sexual market. As in many country-and-western songs, marriage succors against the privations of a world ruled by scarcity, not eros. Scarcity, of course, eventually prevails. The heat of the husband-policeman dissipates: "there's a wet log moaning in the fire…the old thought jerking like a flame." Cycling back into indifference, the poet remarks, "Lying's lonely—to lie/alone at least is good." If, in the poems, the speaker's body is trying to claw out through the mind, "pushing," it also sinks back again into autoerotic solipsism. "I don't love you/like I love you," he quips. In "Masturbatory," an epigraph from Jonathan Edwards ("And so 'self-love' may be taken two ways") announces a poem that ends as follows:

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here goes—. What this is
is arousal's residue, the hands
as hands and someone else.

The "this" is masturbation—or is it poetry? The well-worn joke breaks open a fresh realization of the gesture linking them: the imagining of one's self as other: the "necessary stranger" (as he put it in his previous book). Sexual abjection similarly becomes an act of self-portraiture in "Poem With Lifestyle":

I want to be beaten

within an inch of my likeness
and/or my liking it.

Foust collapses two senses of the word "like" in order to cleave the word "beaten" in two. Liking something is a quality, and qualities define a self. But this is like having an image of oneself beaten out of a blank material, as in metalwork, and so violence toward the self is once again a vehicle for mirroring, for self-knowledge. (If in "Poem With Rules and Laws" violence relieves the anhedonia of marriage, then more violence might be required to spice up the longest cohabitation: oneself with oneself. "I don't love you/like I love you.") Since so much of Foust's work is a declaration of what he likes, embraces and wants to incorporate into his corpus—that is, his body—these poems instruct the reader to become what you like so you can like what you are. And they mark Foust as one of the best erotic poets writing now—one who knows how to wring sex appeal from sly titles and rough enjambments.

The vision of primordial American malehood and its "democratic speech," which Foust's poems and their country-and-western forebears help to fabricate, has a strain in American fiction too. The first note in Foust's first book mentions Cormac McCarthy. The opening poem of *A Mouth in California*, "The Sun Also Fizzles," invokes Ernest Hemingway:

What's this place, between
geography and evening? The sun
also bludgeons; a car has three
wheels;
and what's the wrong way to break
that brick of truth back into music?

But to say, contra *The Sun Also Rises*, that the sun fizzles and that it bludgeons is not just to invoke and then subvert old Papa. It's to rewrite him in a particular way: a hint is the jarring word "geography" and its being coupled to "evening." The phrase evokes the poetic climate of one of Hemingway's nemeses, Wallace Stevens.

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Key West wasn't big enough for the both of them. One evening in 1936, fed up with the rumors of the poet (then in his 50s; Hemingway was in his 30s) smearing his name amid their overlapping social circles, the novelist forced a confrontation. In his own telling, Hemingway dodged Stevens's fist and administered a sound beating. Only when Hemingway paused to take off his glasses did Stevens land a punch, breaking his hand on his rival's impervious jaw. Stevens spent days convalescing. Hemingway concluded his account of the fight in a letter to Sara Murphy, "Anyway last night Mr. Stevens comes over to make up and we are made up. But on mature reflection I don't know anybody needed to be hit worse than Mr. S."

It's a hard image to shake: the Marlboro Man of American letters, creator of a pared-down tensile diction welded to subjects like war and big-game hunting, jabbing at the insurance lawyer from Hartford who cultivated a hothouse vocabulary. Hemingway won the battle in Key West, but Stevens hasn't lost the war. He is a deeply important influence on many contemporary American poets, including Foust, who argues fiercely with him in *A Mouth in California*. In "Los Angeles" he addresses the master whose famous poem "Sunday Morning" relinquishes the notion that paradise lies in the next life: it is always here and now. Foust's riposte:

> The only critique
> of paradise is paradise.
>
> Be there drinking

The argument continues in "Nuances of a Theme by Stevens; Or, Why I Love Country Music":

> *These sounds are long in the living of the ear.*
> *The honky-tonk out of the somnolent grasses*
> *Is a memorizing, a trying out, to keep.*
>
> What I wanted to say—the wind ripping up
> and into everywhere—was "Don't say nothing."
> This was not allowed.
>
> What I said was "Don't say anything."
> This, too, was not allowed—the wind, again,
> ripping up and into everywhere.
>
> The truth, I knew it: breath and heaven—one thing.
> A thing for shrieky talk and fearless error.
> A thing about to happen to anyone.

The first three lines are lifted from Stevens's "Things of August." The rest of the short poem responds to it and to Stevens's most durable theme: the fine line between signal and noise, human and inhuman sound, meaning and nonsense—or mere prosody. ("The Idea of Order at Key West" is Stevens's most perfect expression of this: "It may be that in all her phrases stirred/The grinding water and the gasping wind;/But it was she and not the sea we heard.") Foust zeroes in on Stevens's use of the word "honky-tonk," with all its connotations as a bastardized music from juke joints in the Deep South.

Of all the charges against Mr. S.—he who deserved "to be hit worse than" anybody—none sticks so much as Robert Frost's barb that he wrote bric-a-brac; the word "honky-tonk" rattles the august "Things of August" and thus seems at first listen to be bric-a-brac: a word he used just because he liked it, and to add to his menagerie of sounds. Foust, on the other hand, writes as a real aficionado of honky-tonk: the improper double negative "Don't say nothing," he suggests, is just another way of saying "Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is" (the last line of Stevens's well-known "The Snow Man"). The wind is the surfeit of sound that drowns out the speaker's signal, or in more democratic parlance "shrieky talk." "A thing about to happen to anyone" is death or cosmic accident, which cares not for social class or diction. So Foust redeems a meaning out of Stevens's "honky-tonk," and welcomes him into the company of those who "don't say nothing."

"Nuances of a Theme by Stevens" might be a companion piece to a short essay Foust published in 2005, "Like a Hurricane" (a shout-out to Neil Young), in which he offers an explanation for Stevens's coinage of the word "gramaphoon" in the poem "The Search for Sound Free From Motion." "Gramaphoon" warps the word "gramophone" to rhyme with "typhoon" (their circular motion rhymes, after all):

> Indeed, a record player both repeats endlessly and balances masterfully; by contrast, a poet, constrained by the fixed and rigid world of the written word, needs to wobble a bit, must falter strangely, in order to more truly convey the world in which he or she walks. It seems that poets must also—again, like a hurricane—wreak a little havoc: warping "gramophones" into "gramaphoons," they destroy words and rebuild them in order to get their new and playful worlds to work.

Meanwhile, in *A Mouth in California*, "Poem Beside Itself" instructs us to "queer every relevant dream." That queering, like the wobble in the gramaphoon, or the honky-tonk in "Things of August," is Stevensian. Kin to Emily Dickinson's "Tell all the Truth but tell it slant—," it is the necessary complement to the myth of the Hemingwayesque straight talker of democratic speech. There is no truth in straight talk that doesn't slant, queer or wobble—you can read that wobble as metaphysical or emotional, the voice quavering from heartbreak or the reel of the inebriate.

Dickinson, who called herself an "inebriate of air," has a cameo in *A Mouth in California*'s tour de force, a poem called "My Graham Foust." The title alludes to Susan Howe's *My Emily Dickinson*, a groundbreaking study of Dickinson's devastating poem "My Life had stood—a Loaded Gun—." (Howe, Foust's teacher at SUNY Buffalo, is a dedicatee of this book.) The poem is a riff on Dickinson's trope of imagining herself after death, but it is also a version of the Grateful Dead song "He's Gone":

> Gone's his imposter, and gone's
> his gawky cross. Gone's
> his tweaked legacy's hit list—
> hooray!—
> and gone's his waste of song.

If Foust can write Wallace Stevens into the country music tradition, who's to say he can't write the Grateful Dead into American poetry? Their loping repetitions ("He's gone, gone, and nothing's gonna bring him back") are echoed by his loose ballad meter, but the final stanza is a pentimento of literary references:

> Gone's his sister. Gone's his doctor.
> Gone's his transom. Gone's his view.
> He's nobody's autobiography.
> Whose are you.

Besides the Grateful Dead and Dickinson, there's Gertrude Stein (the author of *Everybody's Autobiography*) and Alexander Pope ("I am his Highness' dog at Kew;/Pray tell me, Sir, whose dog are you?"). The echo of Pope glancing off the echo of Stein evokes another Stein line: "I am I because my little dog knows me." Reprising the theme that what one swallows reverses and comes back out of the mouth again, the poem rings with influences high and low, poetic and folk, I and I, nobody, nothing, anybody and everyone. A hit list without fisticuffs. ■

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SHELF LIFE

by JOHN PALATTELLA

THE LONGEST HOSTAGE EPISODE INvolving American citizens is not the 444 days of captivity that began on November 4, 1979, at the US Embassy in Tehran. It's an episode that started four decades earlier and has shown no signs of resolution, and that has unfolded not on the fringes of American power but at its very center. In 1939 President Roosevelt secretly authorized research on an atomic bomb, an order that led to the establishment of the Manhattan Project—a massive undertaking unchecked by Congress—and soon enough to the obliteration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. "A desirable peace cannot come from such an inhuman application of force," warned the nuclear physicist Enrico Fermi in a report about the second-generation weapon President Truman wanted to build after learning that Stalin had acquired the Bomb.

Garry Wills agrees, but the argument he makes against the Bomb's inhuman force in his intrepid *Bomb Power: The Modern Presidency and the National Security State* (Penguin Press; $27.95) does not concern its terrifying technology. Wills instead describes the political fallout: the myriad ways democratic governance has been weakened by the secretive national security processes that arose with the invention and keeping of the Bomb and that remain concentrated in the executive branch, immune from legislative or judicial scrutiny. No one but the president can push the button. "He doesn't have to call the Congress," Dick Cheney noted—correctly—on Fox News in 2008. "If the President has the sole authority to launch nation-destroying weapons," Wills writes, "he has license to use every other power at his disposal that might safeguard that supreme necessity.... To challenge his authority anywhere is to threaten the one great authority."

Bomb power is imperial executive power, and we are hostage to it. Bomb power is a force employed by man and a force that enslaves man, a force before which human flesh melts and a force whose weight deforms politics: every day an all-day permanent emergency. Wills deplores the harsh interrogation techniques endorsed by the Bush administration, but he does not define them as rogue policies. He views them as the exercise of an imperial presidency, and not unprecedented. They are the pure products of postwar America, even though no one pushed the button.

ONE OF THE EPIGRAPHS IN ELIZabeth Arnold's *Effacement* (Flood; paper $14.95) is a passage from George Oppen's poem "Blood From the Stone": "To a body anything can happen,/Like a brick." Recalling his service as an infantryman in France in World War II, Oppen suggests how the use of force reduces a person to a body—a nameless thing. In *Effacement*, her third volume of poems, Arnold writes about bodies that have suffered gross insults or disfigurement, and while one of the forces of effacement is war, others are cancer, death and the oblivion of time: "anything physical keeps ending/forwards or backwards." Arnold explores these big themes on an intimate scale. The poems are often meditations on a person's persistence in misfortune, on attempts to defy effacement and rise above it, even in defeat. Several poems concern Henry Tonks's medical illustrations of British soldiers who suffered grave facial wounds in World War I. In "XV." Arnold writes of an illustration in which one man "can't close his mouth/because he doesn't have a mouth," but "In the eyes, there is a face." In Tonks's delicate hand Arnold detects a gentle form of effacement: "The way a genius mind turns into something/other than a self."

A similar sensibility informs Arnold's spooky, beautiful poems and their surge of contradictory forces: hanging phrases, absent conjunctions, enjambments across stanza breaks, sentence fragments fragmented further by enjambments, lines given body by the weight of nouns more than the pulse of verbs. Elemental and unsparing, quiet and startling, Arnold's supple syntax is a source of gravity and vertigo. It is an acute expression of a mind's awareness of the tragedy of effacement: in burning through it, we gain a keener sense of our predicament. Here is "XLI.":

> You can see more as a soul,
> darkness speeding into darkness.
>
> Earth's harder.
>
> Like a spacecraft on reentry,
> the body has to
>
> burn its way through the sky's lens.

Effacement offers a language of survival refined from poetry's perishable rewards. ■

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To Curse and Fume

by RUTH SCURR

The Devil in the Holy Water
Or the Art of Slander From Louis XIV to Napoleon.
By Robert Darnton.
Pennsylvania. 535 pp. $34.95.

Four decades ago, Robert Darnton popularized the study of forbidden books under the ancien régime as a resource for understanding the subversive political and philosophical ideas that came to fruition in the French Revolution. Cultural historians on both sides of the Atlantic have followed eagerly in his footsteps ever since. In 2002 Vivian Gruder of Queens College coined the phrase "the 'pornographic' interpretation of the French Revolution" to describe the work of Darnton, Lynn Hunt, Sarah Maza and others, and raised a note of skepticism about the role forbidden books really played in bringing down the French monarchy. Yet those doubts served only to deepen research in what remains a fascinating field.

The Devil in the Holy Water, Darnton's new book on the history of slander in France from Louis XIV to Napoleon, is long, complex and important. To understand it, we need to keep the author's clearly stated purposes in mind:

> Almost any book about eighteenth-century France is bound to bear on classic questions about ideology, politics and the first great revolution of modern times. This book has implications for those questions, but it pursues a different purpose. It is meant to explore a body of literature and the subculture that generated it. I want to understand the lives of libelers, the relation of their publications to their milieu, the way their texts worked (in the use of images and typography as well as rhetoric), the interconnections of libels as a corpus of literature, and, to the extent possible, the reactions of their readers.

Darnton is similarly explicit about his exclusions:

> I do not intend to go over familiar subjects such as Jansenism, the parliamentary opposition to the crown, the ideology of absolutism, the state-sponsored reform movement, and the application of Enlightenment ideas to political issues. Instead, I want to strike out in a different direction, one that leads into the problematic area where history and literature shade off into anthropology.

The Devil in the Holy Water is very ambitious. As the range of subjects that Darnton classes as "familiar" suggests, this is a book for experts on eighteenth-century France; but it is also lucid and scurrilous enough to have much wider appeal. The spectacle of a public figure cut down to size by revelations—true or false—about her or his private life is a literary genre that continues in rude health when more refined forms of writing—literary fiction, criticism and poetry, for example—threaten to become obsolete. Readers will find much to titillate and shock in the slanders that brought *les grands* of eighteenth-century France to their knees. But there is also a contemporary resonance to consider: as our own voracious yellow press goes from strength to strength and life-writing converges on celebrity biography, the more defamatory the better-selling, what can the history of slander and libel teach us?

Darnton's exploration of libelous literature is not a comprehensive survey of the kind he compiled in earlier books like *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime* (1982) and *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (1995). Instead, he uses a number of carefully chosen examples to dissect and illuminate the kinds of publications that the French classified as *libelles*. Before 1789 there were no newspapers as we know them in France, so the main sources for information about politics and public figures were gossip and *libelles*. Darnton argues that a surprising proportion of prerevolutionary bestsellers were *libelles*: on his retrospective bestseller list five of the top twelve were *libelles*, successfully jostling for places alongside books by Rousseau, Voltaire and other *philosophes*. These *libelles* ranged in form from slanderous biographies of public personages to inflammatory accounts of contemporary history, and a titillating variety of journalism known as *chroniques scandaleuses*.

Darnton's first example is *Le Gazetier cuirassé ou anecdotes scandaleuses de la cour de France* (1771): part shocking slander of the great (Voltaire, for example, is mocked as a sodomite) and part amusing puzzle book, requiring the reader to crack its codes like a modern-day crossword. Voltaire, not surprisingly, cursed the book: "A satanic work has just appeared in which everyone, from the monarch to the last citizen, is furiously insulted, in which the most atrocious and absurd calumny spreads a hideous poison over everything that one respects and loves." The author was a mysterious armor-plated gazetteer, who was exposed and libeled in a subsequent work that tracked the supposed transformation of the gazetteer into a Parisian police spy operating from London. *Le Diable dans un bénitier* (The Devil in the Baptismal Font), from 1783, described Receveur the policeman running around London like a headless chicken trying to repress the French libelers who published their works at a safe distance from Paris and the infamous Bastille, where they might be imprisoned and interrogated if caught. Darnton explains that the expression "*le diable dans un bénitier*" was not suggestive of satanic forces undermining sacred institutions to eighteenth-century French readers, for whom it simply denoted frantic yet ineffective agitation. The phrase appeared in the priest J.B.L. Gresset's mock-heroic poem *Vert-Vert* (1734). The poem is about a parrot, the cloistered pet of a convent who is sent on a visit to another, learns profane expressions on the way, shocks the nuns on arrival and is sent back in disgrace to repent and die:

> Bien vite il sut jurer et maugréer
> Mieux qu'un vieux diable au fond d'un bénitier
>
> (Very soon he learned to curse and fume
> Better than an old devil in the bottom of a baptismal font.)

Darnton argues that *Le Diable dans un bénitier* is the richest source of information we have about slander under the ancien régime. Understanding who wrote it and why requires reference to a third connected text: *La Police de Paris dévoilée* (The Parisian Police Unveiled), from 1790. And the author of this third text, Pierre Manuel, can be comprehended only through a fourth: *Vie secrète de Pierre Manuel* (The Secret Life of Pierre Manuel), from 1793. It is Manuel who carries the four linked libels that Darnton showcases into the Revolu-

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tion, where Manuel forged a prominent political career before being guillotined on November 14, 1793.

Born in 1753 in Nemours, Manuel was raised in Montargis and sent to a seminary in Sens. Instead of becoming a priest, he left the church for the book trade. A printer in Paris in the rue Serpente gave him a room in exchange for help in the shop. Manuel wrote libels and supplied them to peddlers. After the Revolution in 1789, the peddlers of his district elected him to the Commune, where he lined his pockets dealing in the archives of the newly demolished Bastille. In his own texts, he specialized in "unveiling" not only the police and the ancien régime's iconic fortress but also the clergy. His greatest coup was the publication of the letters of the unofficial leader of the Commons (or Third Estate), the comte de Mirabeau, who had been incarcerated in the Bastille before the Revolution at the request of his family. After the collapse of the monarchy, Manuel tried to save Louis XVI's life by rigging the Convention's voting procedure. All his efforts to hide his ill-gotten gains failed, and he was in prison awaiting trial and execution when the *Vie secrète de Pierre Manuel* was published as a cautionary denunciatory tale.

Darnton presents the *Vie secrète de Pierre Manuel* as a new genre: the Jacobin libel. But he connects it to the tradition of hostile biographies that ran throughout the eighteenth century with titles like "*Vie privée de…*" or "*Vie secrète de…*" The continuity, Darnton argues, is not surprising, "because all libels slandered their victims in the same way, despite the variations in their tone and context." When the Robespierrists needed to win public support during the Terror, they sought not only to guillotine their opponents but also to destroy their reputations. The blade may have been sharper than the pen, but the pen, when honed by political turbulence, could cut a name to shreds. To do this the Robespierrists used the same printers, and relied on the same literary traditions, as the hack writers under the ancien régime.

After setting out the content of the *Vie secrète de Pierre Manuel*, Darnton skillfully extracts from it the factual content couched inside the libel. In his time, if not in the eyes of posterity, Manuel was one of the best-known deputies elected to the National Convention intended to design a new, republican form of government for France after the collapse of the monarchy in August 1792. Previously he had gained notoriety by writing an open letter to Louis XVI that began, "Sire, I do not like kings." During the September massacres that marked the passing of the monarchy, Manuel, as public prosecutor of the Commune, saved the intellectual Madame de Staël from being murdered by the mob. She found refuge in Paris in his office in the Hôtel de Ville and sat watching from the window as blood-splattered executors of the people's vengeance went to and fro, reporting to the Commune on the massacres. Madame de Staël was the daughter of Jacques Necker, Louis XVI's minister of finance on the eve of the Revolution, and she had sat watching from a window in Versailles as the deputies to the Estates General processed to their first meeting in 1789. In just three years the Revolution had delivered her into the hands of a libeler like Manuel, whose portrait by Ducreux hung above his desk in the Hôtel de Ville, the paint probably still wet.

BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE

An author, J. Emmanuel La Coste, being pilloried for writing libels in 1760

Darnton returns insistently to the question of how these libels were read. He admits that there is no simple answer: "How to get inside the minds of people who tried to make sense of the printed word more than two centuries ago?" Undaunted, he assembles the evidence he has trawled for in marginalia, police reports and other fragmentary records of reading as a social phenomenon. Particularly helpful is Louis-Sébastien Mercier's description, in his *Tableau de Paris*, of the *bouquinistes*: booksellers who sold everything, even recently prohibited books that they kept "behind the boards" of their shops. Darnton contrasts Mercier's description of the formation of public opinion with the conventional Enlightenment view of rational illumination and emerging consensus. Instead, Mercier described public opinion as a cacophony that swirled through the streets and erupted in the Palais-Royal: "It is there that fantasies become realities, that one imagines alliances, fabricates treaties, ousts ministers, and makes sovereigns live or die." Darnton supplements this account by recovering the apolitical kinds of reading that persisted alongside it. Reading for amusement, then as now, encompassed many forms: *épigramme*, *épitaphe*, *épithalame*, *étrennes*, *bouts rimés*, *question*, *fable*, *parodie*, *anecdote*, *allégorie*, *portrait*, *boutade*, *bon mot*, *placet*, *brunette*, *chansonnette*. All these were word puzzles with seemingly "no purpose other than amusement and the exercise of wit," Darnton writes.

Nevertheless, it is the political role of slander that grips Darnton, and he is drawn back irresistibly to the police archives, which disclose that the real author of *Le Diable dans un bénitier* is Anne-Gédéon Lafitte, marquis de Pelleport: "a thoroughly wicked ne'er-do-well, and a very talented writer." Pelleport was that most dangerous person under the ancien régime: a déclassé. Born an aristocrat, he had sunk to the ranks of the libelers. He was a close friend of Jacques-Pierre Brissot, a Revolutionary journalist, campaigner for the emancipation of slaves and member of the Girondin faction. Pelleport translated into French the

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English pamphleteer David Williams's political tract *Letters on Political Liberty* (1782), and he started on a translation of Catherine Macaulay's radical eight-volume *History of England* but abandoned it. *Le Diable dans un bénitier* was the supreme libel of his career. He was ambushed and arrested and then imprisoned in the Bastille from July 11, 1784, until October 3, 1788. In Darnton's estimation, *Les Bohémiens*, the two-volume autobiographical novel Pelleport wrote in the Bastille and published in 1790, ranks with the Marquis de Sade's *Justine*: an endorsement of sorts, though not to everyone's taste. (The book now exists in English as *The Bohemians*, in a translation by Vivian Folkenflik and with an introduction by Darnton.)

Les Bohémiens can be read as a *Bildungsroman*, libertine treatise or anticlerical tract, but it is also indisputably a novel of ideas: one in which the early French school of economists known as Physiocrats and the proponents of natural law are pitted against advocates of enlightened despotism and theorists of predatory self-interest. Brissot's utopian Rousseauism is also pilloried. Once again, sodomy is central to the slander, and the novel includes the cryptic scurrilous remark "A mouse who has only one hole is soon caught." Darnton embarks on a feminist interpretation:

> While elaborating a discourse on natural law, Séché [one of the novel's philosophers] goes so far as to argue that men should own women as a form of property that can be bought, sold, traded, rented, and inherited. To be sure, this burlesque episode reads more like a satire against the subjugation of women than an argument in favor of it. The narrator constantly presents women as objects of male desire, yet he also attributes an aggressive sexual energy to them, for the same *élan vital* courses through all forms of life: women are for the taking, and they help themselves to men.

This brings to mind Angela Carter's feminist reading of the Marquis de Sade's novels in *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography* (1978). Carter saw Sade as a moral pornographer: someone for whom sex was a manifestation of power in a society built on force. But unlike Carter, who presented Sade to a late twentieth-century audience as a resource for thinking about modern gender relations, Darnton emphasizes the gulf that divides the eighteenth century from the twenty-first. He insists that it is virtually impossible to know how contemporary readers (few in number as they were) responded to *Les Bohémiens*. Its publication was a "non-event situated at the heart of the most eventful period of French history. Even if a few copies made it into the hands of readers, they can hardly have provoked much of a reaction." It is difficult to gauge how much interest there was in 1790 in a satirical account of a republic of letters that no longer existed; people were perhaps more interested in the revolutionary politics that was bringing about the invention of a new form of republican government at the heart of the French state. Darnton ventures that we in the twenty-first century might be better placed than its contemporary readers to appreciate Pelleport's novel as "the first full embodiment of bohemianism." But it is also possible that the power of its satire is simply lost on readers for whom Brissot was just another revolutionary dreamer destined to die beneath the guillotine.

One of the most engaging features of Darnton's historical writing is his modesty and skepticism about what it is possible to know. "To follow a few lives from the Ancien Régime into the Revolution is to tell a story, not to explain the general nature of the changes that swept through eighteenth-century France," he affirms. Plenty would shy away from such a frank admission of the limitations of their erudition, however sizable. Darnton has identified forty-two "private lives" published between 1789 and 1800. They vary in quality, length and political orientation, but they are all continuations of the basic techniques of defamation under the ancien régime: they reduce politics to personalities and in doing so, Darnton writes, obscure "the fundamental conflicts of principles and interests that ran through the Revolution." That—in short—is why all libels look the same, whether printed in clandestine pamphlets or newsstand tabloids. The Revolution, Darnton argues, kept the form but changed the substance of a genre derived from the court of Louis XIV and fitted it onto a new, unruly body politic. Libels were reassuring insofar as they reduced political complexity to a simple story line centered on questions of personality. Above and beyond its highways, byways and detours into the forgotten history of eighteenth-century French literature and culture, *The Devil in the Holy Water* reminds us that when journalists reduce political analysis to a clash of personalities, almost everything we need to know, past and present, gets lost. ■

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Events

NATIONAL

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The advertising deadline for Events is every Thursday. Rates: $210 for 50 words; $260 for 75 words, additional words (above 75) $2.00 each. To place an ad, call Amanda at (212) 209-5414.

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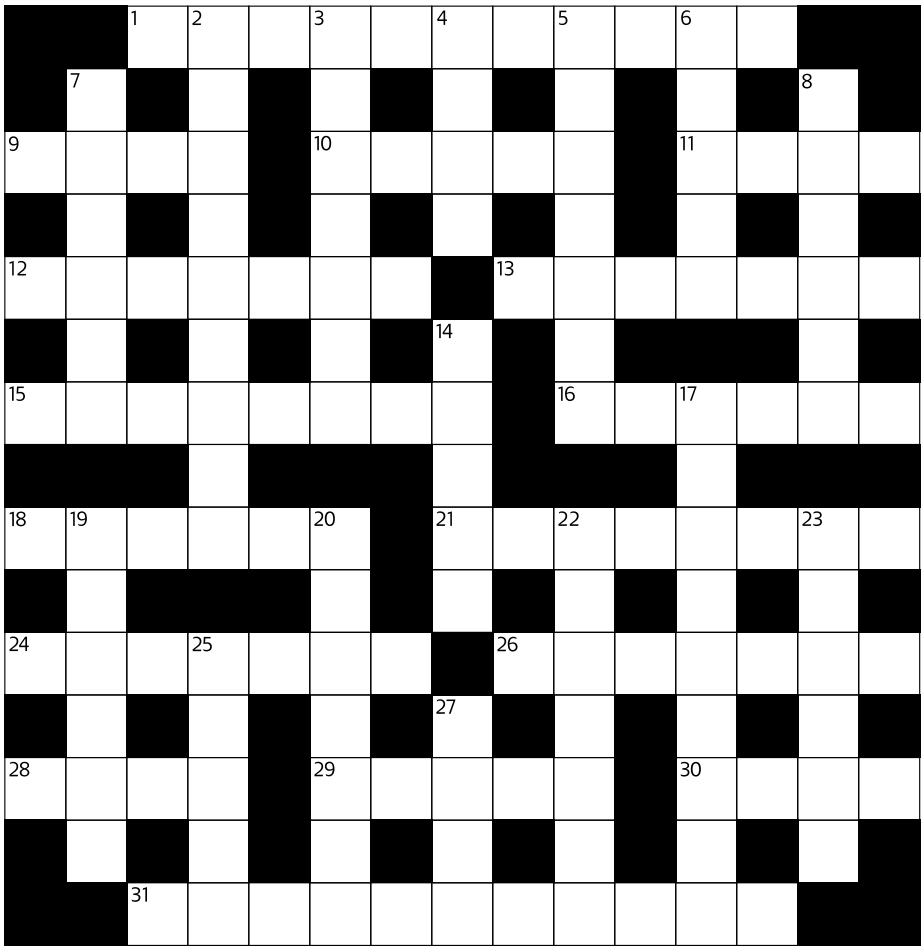
Puzzle No. 1295

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 In entrances, one gets left with fencing, perhaps. (6,5)

9 It might be a liquid container in Delancy Street. (4)

10 and **28** One needs a little space to push aside part of the house. (5,4)

11 See 15 across

12 Nathan Bedford, perhaps, and how he used his pallet. (7)

13 See 7 down

15 and **11** One might be 31 with it, but the left hands aren't necessarily boney. (8,4)

16 A number might require backing, and it's about time! (6)

18 Did something associated with love and honor? (6)

21 A whale of a story! (4-4)

24 Artists in the cabinet, perhaps. (7)

26 The fine points of military duty. (7)

28 See 10

29 and **17** down To bring things up, such as "What Linemen Are Supposed to Do"? (5,3,6)

30 See 25 down

31 The pitch might be foul! (11)

DOWN

2 Without pretense, a relative confusion at the big meeting? (9)

3 Too much of the type with a physical disorder? (7)

4 One might be all wrapped up in the head of 28 and half of 18. (4)

5 Studied intensively about us, with the force available. (7)

6 One the track of a snake? (5)

7 and **13** across How a fisherman or shepherd makes his living, one way or another? (2,4,2,5)

8 About a speck a long way off? (6)

14 One is bound to be on the other side. (5)

17 See 29 across

19 Legal argument pushed by many? (6)

20 One might find such things last. (7)

22 One might legally do it to his own car, but not someone else's. (5,2)

23 They have their points as South American money-makers. (6)

25 and **30** In two words, what George Wither hoped to find, or just females collectively? (9)

27 Barbarian New York, the morning after! (4)

This puzzle originally appeared in the April 28, 1969, issue.

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 816

G	A	M	E	C	O	C	K	S	■	S	C	A	L	P
O	■	E	■	O	■	R	■	O	■	U	■	V	■	S
I	G	N	O	B	L	E	■	D	U	B	I	E	T	Y
N	■	T	■	B	■	E	■	D	■	J	■	R	■	C
G	R	I	L	L	E	D	■	E	Y	E	L	A	S	H
■	■	O	■	E	■	S	O	N	■	C	■	G	■	O
H	O	N	O	R	S	■	V	■	S	T	R	E	S	S
O	■	■	■	■	A	M	I	G	O	■	■	■	■	I
N	I	C	E	L	Y	■	N	■	U	S	A	G	E	S
O	■	A	■	E	■	R	E	D	■	Q	■	L	■	■
R	A	D	I	A	T	E	■	E	M	U	L	O	U	S
A	■	D	■	N	■	A	■	C	■	E	■	S	■	T
B	L	I	N	D	E	D	■	O	V	E	R	S	E	E
L	■	S	■	E	■	E	■	C	■	Z	■	E	■	A
E	T	H	E	R	■	R	O	T	T	E	R	D	A	M

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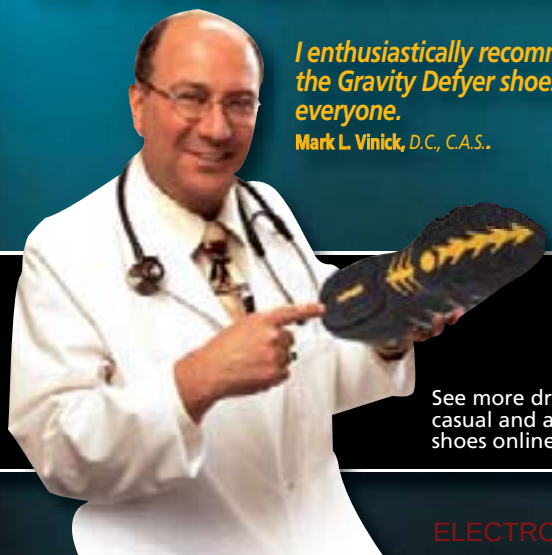

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